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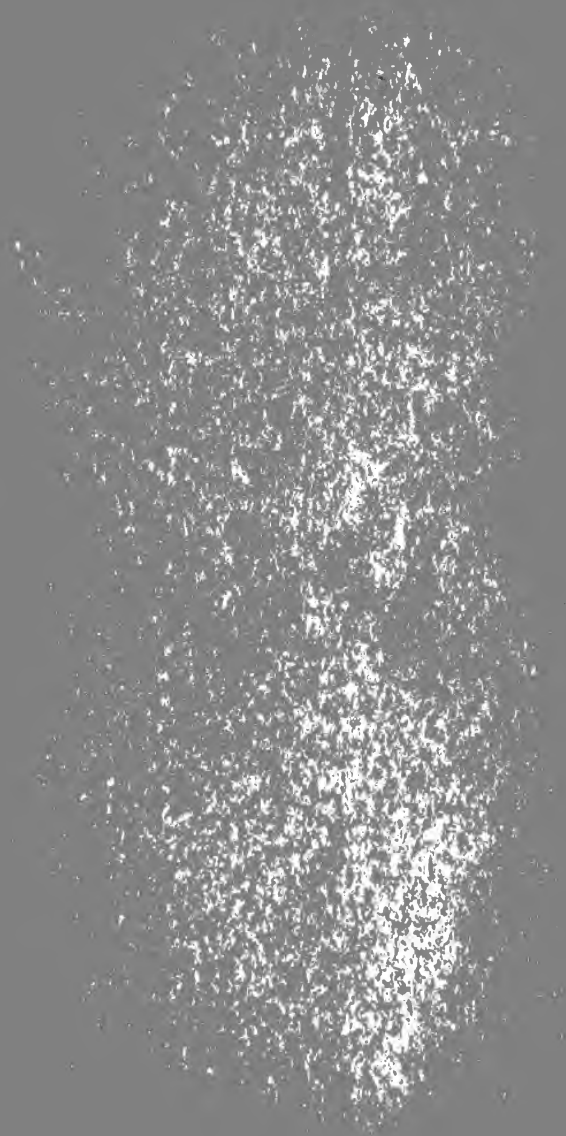
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.





EVANGELISTIC SERMONS

WITH AN ESSAY

ON THE

Scriptural and Catholic Creed of Baptism

BY

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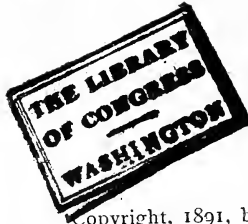


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To

My Mother

In Heaven.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

THE PLACE AND POWER OF PRAYER IN EVANGELISM. "But we will continue steadfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the Word" (Acts vi. 4)-----	9-25
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------

SERMON II.

HEARING THE GOSPEL. "Hear, and your soul shall live" (Isa. lv. 3)-----	27-44
------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------

SERMON III.

REPENTANCE. "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke xxiv. 47)-----	45-63
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------

SERMON IV.

FAITH AND LIFE. "That life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. ii. 20)-----	65-92
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------

SERMON V.

THE GOOD CONFESSION. "And didst confess the good confession, in the sight of many witnesses" (1. Tim. vi. 12)--	93-114
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------

SERMON VI.

THE BAPTISM OF THE BELIEVER. "And when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts viii. 12)-----	115-134
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------

SERMON VII.

CONVERSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE. "And that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II. Tim. iii. 15)-----	135-158
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------

SERMON VIII.

THE PENITENT ROBBER. "And he said, Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom. And he said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke xxiii. 42. 43)-----	159-180
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------

(5)

SERMON IX.

- GLORIFYING GOD IN THE NAME CHRISTIAN.. "But if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name" (I. Pet. iv. 16)----- 181-211

SERMON X.

- THE FEAR OF HELL. "And be not afraid of them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. x. 28)----- 213-234

SERMON XI.

- THE SELF-RESPECT AND SALVATION OF YOUNG MEN. "And as he was going forth into the way, there ran one to him, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said to him, Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, even God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor thy father and mother. And he said him, Master, all these things have I observed from my youth. And Jesus looking upon him, loved him, and said unto him, Go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me. But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions" (Mark x. 17-22)----- 235-250

SERMON XII.

- THE POSSESSION AND PRACTICE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. v. 6). "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous" (I. John iii. 7)----- 251-271

SERMON XIII.

- CRISES OF DECISION IN CONVERSION. "And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation" (Acts ii. 40)----- 273-286

SERMON XIV.

- THE GOSPEL, A MISSION AND A CULTURE. "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20)----- 287-305

ESSAY.

- THE SCRIPTURAL AND CATHOLIC CREED OF BAPTISM----- 307-391

SERMON I.

THE PLACE AND POWER OF
PRAYER IN EVANGELISM.

EVANGELISTIC SERMONS.

I.

THE PLACE AND POWER OF PRAYER IN EVANGELISM.

“But we will continue steadfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word.”—*Acts vi. 4.*

Prayer has a place, a prominent place, in all true evangelism; it has a power, a divine power, there. In a meeting for the conversion of sinners there ought to be a surcharge of the spirit of prayer, and a great deal of praying; prayerfulness on the part of all the disciples, and the utterance of many prayers in the course of the meeting. Prayer has its place and power in such gatherings, as it is meant to affect both saint and sinner. There should be praying for both the saved and the unsaved. Indeed, it is the condition of the unsaved, their guilt, their misery, their crying needs, that makes a disciple pray not only for himself, but for himself in view of the sad condition of the unsaved, that the blessing of prayer on himself may, in God's providence, be linked to some good for the sheep that are still astray. Do we appreciate the place and power of prayer at such times? Each one of us, let him answer honestly—what are our convictions, our habits, our experiences. in this matter? Do we feel like

praying—do we feel that we ought to pray—do we pray a great deal, in protracted meetings held for the conversion of sinners? Not only do we sing tender songs, inviting sinners to be saved; not only do we preach to sinners, exhorting them to be saved; but do we pray for them, and concerning them, fervently and frequently, that they may be saved?

Let us make no mistakes. Indeed, I think that we need to learn a lesson, get our first light, from a quick look at two blunderings that often happen, one or the other, as to prayers in revival services.

Here is one picture. A meeting is going on. It is a time of excitement—which is all right, if it be a healthy excitement. Crowds are in attendance nightly. Preacher and people are absorbed in the enthusiasm of saving souls. What at once strikes a reverent observer who is also thoughtful? Why, *praying* seems to be the exercise to which everything else is not only subordinated, but sacrificed. There has been no sermon proper. No Scripture has been directly nor instructively quoted. The Bible even lies unopened. The speaker took what he called a text—took it from memory—some imagery from the Old Testament; and he shifts this in rapid lights to stir the feelings of his audience. He simply talks excitably and excitingly; and at a certain pitch of emotion in himself and his hearers, he falls to praying. There are many prayers—one after the other. All the exhortation is to induce sinners to come and kneel at a certain place, or to stand where they are, and the praying goes on. There is no teaching a sinner to *do* anything with reference to his salvation. He is exhorted to expect to *feel* his salvation—to wait for that, while passively he calls on

the name of the Lord, and while the prayers of others also go up to God for his salvation. And what is a strange note, the dominant note, of all the praying? Why, it sounds altogether as if God's face was averted, and as if the great and only need just now is to get Him willing to save suppliant, helpless sinners, and to save them in some miraculous way with which neither preacher nor people have anything to do.

That is one picture. It is an extreme one. But it is true to life, every line of it. It could have been seen in the old-fashioned camp-meetings of fifty years ago. It can be seen sometimes, during revivals, even in cities nowadays. It is one of the mistakes made concerning the place and power of prayer in evangelistic meetings. It is a misuse of the place and power of prayer there. It can not stand the light of Apostolic practice—"We will continue steadfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word"—not only prayer, but the ministry of the Word—steadfast prayer, and steadfast ministry of the Word—praying and preaching together, in due proportion and power.

Here is the other picture. A meeting is going on. There is no special excitement, though the attendance is encouraging as to numbers. There are enough sinners present to fire any true preacher with zeal in his work. What at once strikes the reverent observer who is also thoughtful? Why, *preaching* seems to be the exercise to which everything else is not only subordinated, but sacrificed. There is some singing, a brief passage of Scripture is read, and there is one prayer of three or four minutes before the long sermon—the only prayer throughout that evening's meeting. What about the prayer strikes our thought-

ful observer, is that it is rather general in view, and sounds mechanical. It addresses the throne of grace, and it implies a religious experience. But it lacks warmth, it lacks directness. It makes a slight reference to the special object of the meeting, but in an indirect way, without awakening any responsive *Amen* in the hearts of the audience. The sermon took up nearly all the time. It was over an hour in length; and it was a terrific onslaught on theological errors and heresies, and a parade of so-called logical laws and strictures. The logic of the sermon and the manner of the preacher were chiefly in the minds of the audience—in the minds of those that listened. When the meeting adjourned one of the auditors was heard to remark: "That discourse was all *sound*." But there seemed to be in the meeting no burning desire for the salvation of sinners—no burning desire; certainly no warm, direct prayer had been offered in their behalf.

That is the other picture. It is an extreme one. But it is true to life, every line of it. It was seen in protracted meetings fifty years ago. It can be seen in protracted meetings to-day. It is the other mistake made concerning the place and power of prayer in evangelistic services. It is a lack of appreciation of the place and power of prayer there. It can not stand the light of Apostolic practice. "We will continue steadfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word"—not only the ministry of the Word, but prayer—steadfast ministry of the Word, and steadfast prayer—preaching and praying together, in due proportion and power.

These are the two mistakes to be avoided. One of them is a misuse of prayer in protracted meetings.

The other is a lack of appreciation of its place and power there. But surely, according to God's Word, there is a place of prayer, a power of prayer, in all right work of saving sinners. What is this place? How shall we know it? What is the power? How shall we realize it? To the law and the testimony! Let us speak according to this Word.

What a large place prayer occupied in Paul's ministry of the Gospel, and how he taught the duty of prayer for the unsaved! For instance, we hear him exhorting Timothy to intercessory prayer. "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men." This is a mighty proof-text of the subject. Mark it. It is the widest range of praying, as the disciples of Jesus Christ count prayer. It is the prayer for humanity. It is the true universal prayer. It is prayer with every faculty—prayer with every feeling—prayer in every light—prayer from every reason—prayer with every note—prayer for every need—prayer for all good—such praying by a disciple of Christ, not only for himself, but "for all men." Easily and logically does the Apostle show one of the applications of such a prayer. He exhorts, for instance, that it be made for "kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life, in all godliness and gravity." Certainly. There is no leap in Paul's exhortation. There is no twisting of his doctrine, illogically, for a practical end. He is naturally and purposely indicating one of the needs of the Christian's universal prayer. The prayer for kings and governments lies right along in the light of the fullest and heartiest praying for mankind. There is a vital connection between salva-

tion and civilization, between the Gospel and the peace of nations, between God in the Church and God in history. The very reason that Paul gives for this prayer shows it. Listen! "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." There it is. The sublime motive of prayer for all men is the reason of prayer for kings and a country's peace. The deep reason of prayer for kings and rulers is really the high reason of prayer for humanity—because God is Saviour, and wills that all men should be saved. There can be no true praying for all men, no true praying for anybody, no true asking any blessing for them, that is not, first and last, also a prayer for their salvation in time and eternity. All these "supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings"—the universal prayer—have their full purpose and power as they bear on the redemption of all men. So the truth becomes more luminous still, as the Apostle goes on shedding the light of noble motives, adding reason to reason. "For there is one God, one mediator between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all; the testimony to be borne in its own times." Prayer for all men, then, as Paul teaches and exhorts, we see its reason and power in God's favor and mercy willing their salvation, in the mediation of Jesus Christ bringing their salvation, in the testimony of the Gospel proclaiming their salvation.

What Paul taught and exhorted to, he also signally practiced, concerning this world-wide prayer for others. "My heart's desire"—so he begins one of his own intercessions. His own heart is right before God.

No malice rankles there against the disobedient and gainsaying Jews, many of them dead set against him in vengeance. His heart is full of the spirit of Christ; a desire burns deeply there. But it is not only a desire; it is also a supplication, a passionate desire, a fervent supplication. "Brethren, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved." It is plainly, beautifully, impressively Apostolic to pray for the unsaved. There is no doubt that in all Apostolic preaching of the Gospel there was a place, a large place, for prayer in behalf of sinners, prayer for their salvation, a large part of the praying in which the Apostles steadfastly continued while they steadfastly also preached the Word.

But if prayer has a right place in protracted meetings; if it be beautiful and acceptable in God's sight to pray for sinners, then what is the power of prayer? How shall we pray? What are scriptural prayers in a revival, as they may affect the saved and the unsaved?

Consider one of Paul's requests for prayer, as the answer bears on the success of the Gospel. He is asking his Thessalonian converts to pray for him. "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified, even as it is also with you." Mark at once how that prayer for the success of the Gospel, for an untrammelled, glorious success of the Gospel, is bound up with prayer for the preacher of the Gospel. The figure is stirring. It represents the Gospel as a rapid runner along the course of life, exultant in the glory of its triumphs, radiant in the splendor of its victories. The Word of the Lord reigns and is glorified in the salvation of sinners. Paul, in requesting this prayer, has not in mind some glittering

generality that may mean everything or nothing. He wants prayer for a triumph of the Gospel, the like of which he saw afterwards in Ephesus, when sinners came, and confessed their sins, and burnt the tools of their evil practices, "so mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed." Mark, too, how that, in thus requesting the Thessalonians to pray for the success of the Gospel in the conversion of sinners, including himself in the prayer, he pointedly adds, "and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and evil men." What are the pith and point of this prayer? It is a prayer for the success of the Gospel in the conversion of sinners, the preacher included in the prayer—a prayer founded upon the conviction that God is living and present and powerful in providences that make such success of the Gospel possible, especially as He thwarts or overrules the antagonisms of evil men.

Let us look at another request of Paul's for prayer. It is a request for prayer, as the answer to it bears on the value of opportunities in preaching the Gospel. He is asking the disciples of Colosse to pray for him. "Withal, praying for us also, that God may open a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds." He is there in Rome, the prisoner of the Lord, dwelling in his own hired house, receiving all who come to him. He is anxious for the widest spread of the Gospel in the capital of the world. He himself prays that God may open a door for the Word. He requests others to pray the same. And the answer came. The Apostle tells the Philippians of the hand of God in opening the door for the Word in Rome. "Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen

out rather unto the progress of the Gospel ; so that my bonds became manifest throughout the whole prætorian guard, and to all the rest ; and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear." What are the pith and point of this prayer ? It is a prayer founded upon the conviction that God is living and present and powerful in providences that open the way for the preaching of the Word.

Look at the additional clause in the same request of the Colossians, combining it with the fuller statement of a like request of the Ephesians. "Praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and in my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains ; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." This subject of prayer, its place and power in efforts to save sinners by preaching the Gospel, is now seen to be a very personal one for the preacher himself. It is the man Paul, of like nature with other men, now the prisoner of the Lord in the capital of the world, still having trouble with enemies and factious opponents, not feeling strong in himself, feeling the need to pray, asking others to pray for him, that he may have courage in preaching the Gospel, "that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak." What are the pith and point of this prayer ? It is a prayer founded upon the conviction that God is living and present and powerful in the souls of the ministers of His Word, to strengthen them and guide them in their service.

What is the summary of this teaching of Scripture ? Prayer has a prominent place and power

in evangelistic meetings held for the salvation of sinners. It has a place and power there as affecting both the saved and the unsaved. It flows from a holy desire in the hearts of Christ's disciples that sinners may be saved. It flows out in fervent supplication that they may be saved. It prays for the presence and power of God in the providences of events, and in the consecration of his Church, according as these, in every possible way, facilitate the preaching of the Gospel to sinners. It is varied in spirit and style, thoughtful, trustful, fervent, as it ascends to God for all men—for this and that class of men—for all men; as it seeks, above every other blessing, that they may realize the eternal redemption obtained for them by Christ Jesus. It thus goes up to God, assured that such praying is beautiful and acceptable in His sight, since especially He "willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth."

Shall we pray during this series of meetings? Indeed, let us pray often and fervently. Let us pray here in God's house, and in our own homes, and in the closet of our hearts during the day. But let us pray wisely, let us pray scripturally, according to the will of God. Surely we do not want to pray ignorantly nor presumptuously. We must not expect impossibilities nor absurdities. Is it right for us to pray that God will work a miracle in saving sinners, to the shock and surprise of the sinners themselves? Is it scriptural for us to pray that God will bring some power to bear on them, apart from the Word of the truth of the Gospel, in some abstract, inexplicable way, which, with lightning rapidity, in some electric stir of

feeling, will assure them instantaneously then and there, once for all and forever, that they are pardoned and saved? Is it the teaching of the Bible that a sinner must simply pray for himself, while others simply pray for him, he doing nothing else, preacher and people exhorting him to do nothing else, simply to pray and wait, and in this passive attitude to look for a peculiar emotion that will be the sign of his salvation? Why, to ask those questions is immediately to answer no, in the light of God's Word. This is not the right use of prayer in efforts to save sinners. The Apostles did nothing of this kind. There is nothing like it in the Book of the Acts, the great book of conversions. Nowhere in it, from Peter's preaching in Jerusalem to Paul's preaching in Rome, in no conversion there recorded, do we read that sinners were taught to stop on their knees, and to keep praying, to do nothing else but pray and wait, pray on, wait on, until they felt a certain sensation, and that this would be the assurance that they were saved.

I think that the sad history of this way of doing ought to arouse us all and keep us all from this dangerous error. It has made conversion a matter of uncertainty and long delay; and in the Bible conversion is simple, clear, prompt, without waiting or wonder. It has kept inquiring sinners in agony and tears, vainly waiting for light; and in the Bible every anxious sinner saw the Way as fast as his eyes could be pointed to the Way, and never had to wait in a torture of doubts and fears before he could be saved. It has misled sinners to trust to dreams and visions, to expect voices and marvelous experiences, to turn their eyes within and become absorbed in the fluctuation of their

emotions, and to watch for a certain pitch or state of feeling where they could "get religion." Here has been the climax of danger and harm in this misuse of prayer for salvation. It has not only kept inquirers waiting, praying for a marvelous sense of pardon; but often the result has been, when this excitement died away, that the poor sinner has become anxious again, and feels uncertain after all whether he was really saved. The salvation of the Gospel does not come in such an abuse of prayer. We may be sure that any prayer or prayers are wrong that make the salvation of the Gospel a thing of varying moods, not of clear-cut convictions—of fanciful visions, not of intelligent promises—of praying alone, and not also of simple faith and prompt obedience. Steadfast in prayer and steadfast in preaching—that is the Apostolic bond. We dare not separate them. We dare not pray only, and tell the unsaved to pray only for their salvation. We dare not stop preaching, and neglect it, as if there were nothing in it as a message of duty for sinners, as well as of prayer for them, that they might be saved.

We are to pray, then, while we preach. We are to pray scriptural prayers—prayers that do not slight nor stop the purpose, the power of preaching the Gospel, but prayers that agree with genuine Apostolic preaching, and help it to success in saving sinners. What a privilege we have in the prayers of this evangelistic meeting! Mark them. We may pray that God will take out of the way all hindering objects and causes. What are they? How many are there? Do you know them? Do you know any? Is there one in your own heart? Are you opposed to evangelistic meetings? Do you sit back, and criticise them with a

would-be philosophical air? "Oh, what is the use of them, anyhow? Is n't there danger of too much excitement? Won't they do more harm than good? Why not just go along quietly and expect conversions at the regular services of the church?" That is sometimes a high wall straight across the course of the Gospel. It is raised, alas! too often in the hearts of church members who selfishly forget that they were saved in a protracted meeting. We must pray God to break down all those walls of hostility, opposition, indifference. It is the very first praying to do—prayers for ourselves to become more alive to the interests of sinners, to come regularly to these meetings, to arrange our business, set our times, order our steps, so that we shall be here, each one, every night, ready and glad for our part in this work of the Gospel.

Perhaps the hindrance is plainer to see. It is your conduct that is wrong. The world sees it, and knows it—your swearing, your tippling, your trickery in trade, your bribery in politics. These stumbling-blocks in the lives of disciples—they stand out with lamentable prominence when a congregation begins a protracted meeting. They are pointed at by the sinner on the outside, who tries to excuse himself behind them as a hindrance to his own salvation. It is a time for church members to repent and pray for themselves. Certainly there can be no free course of the Word, if a church be worldly, given to frivolous amusements, spotted with immoralities, sometimes with a canker of mutual hatreds eating at its very heart. Here is the first prayer, not so much for deliverance from the talk and scoff of infidels, but from our own evil selves. Nay, no matter what the name of a congregation for purity and

good works, the beginning of an evangelistic service ought to be a time of self-searching, repentance, prayer that the whole membership as one heart may be free from every obstacle in the way of the Gospel's power. It is a time for every disciple to pray humbly for himself that neither in deed, nor in word, nor in thought, there be one hindrance to the Gospel's success.

We may then well go on praying. Let us pray that God, in his providence, will open a door for the Word. A door here, a door there, door after door, many doors, innumerable doors; we may pray for them, we may expect them to swing open on all sides, if we watch as well as pray. It means the opportunity, in God's providence, the opportunity for the Spirit of truth to do its work in the heart and conscience. Pray for an opportunity of speech—that wise moment when one word of love and light will win your friend to the Saviour. Pray for an opportunity of example, some self-control, some beauty of character which breathes the very spirit of religion, whose influence brings the heart irresistibly to believe and obey. Pray for an opportunity of self-sacrifice, sincere, genuine, which others may see, who straightway glorify God. Let us pray that the Lord may see fit to use each one of us, in some way, as a channel of His grace and power in behalf of sinners. We can not pray too much for these open doors. They are of all kinds, everywhere in human life, according as the providence of God opens them for the Word. It has sometimes been the touch of a little daughter's hand on her father's, her gentle voice begging him to go with her and confess Christ. It may be a sweet Gospel song, charming the listener with the story of the Cross. Occasionally has a royal day of happi-

ness, with the very seal of Heaven upon it, opened the heart to give heed to the Gospel's call. More often has the day of trial, a reversal of fortune, a time of sickness, a new-made grave, silently opened the door, and the soul has been saved. The living, direct exhortation, in tears and love, reaches the conscience, or the memory of a far-off appeal from lips long hushed in death, has its perfect work, and the Word is glorified. In the very spirit and manner of Paul, let us pray that God may open unto us a door for the Word.

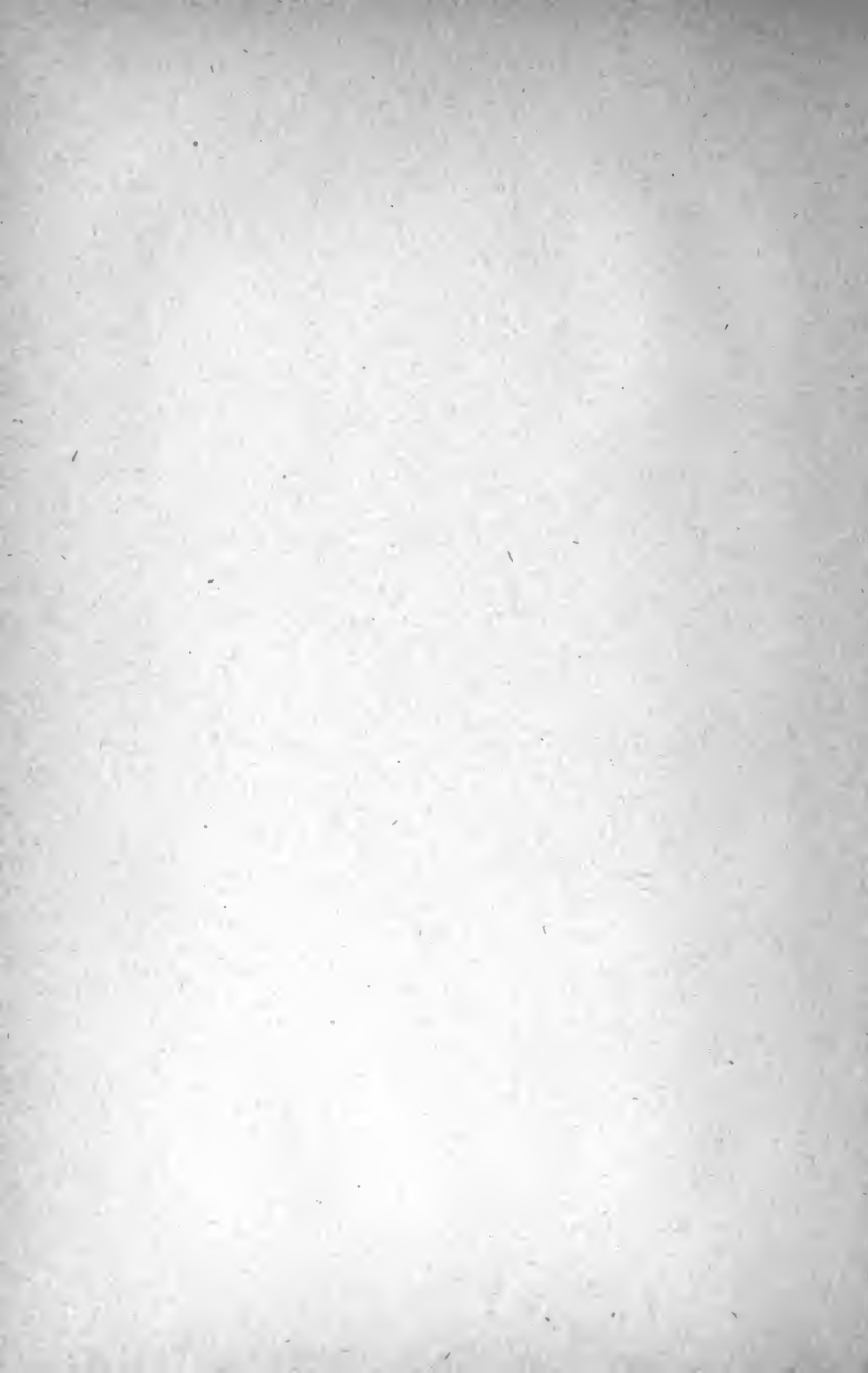
Do not forget the special prayer for the preacher. That is according to Paul, too. He needed the blessing of prayer in his ministry. Certainly we need it. We, too, need wisdom of speech, courage of speech, a consecration of mind and heart in this daily evangelism. We need to be strengthened mightily through the Spirit in the inward man. Pray that we may have the spirit, not of fearfulness, but of power and love and discipline. We can not, we dare not presume to work alone. We are not sufficient of ourselves. The burden is too great for any mortal man to bear by himself. It is the wildest presumption for any preacher to think that it is just a matter of glibness of speech, or logical skill, or heated anecdotes, or revival racket, to save men. Preach the Gospel as we must, human lips allowed and consecrated to tell the way of salvation, we must pray also. The spirit, the atmosphere, the tone of this meeting will be decided according to your and my prayers.

It means that we, the saved, preachers and all, are dependent on God. We are fellow-workers with God in saving sinners by preaching. One may plant, another may water; God gives the increase. This sub-

lime service of preaching the Gospel to the unsaved we can duly do only in Him that strengthens us. The secret of our work is that it is God working in us and through us. It does not take away our responsibility to preach and exhort. It does not relieve the sinner of his responsibility to hear and obey. Nay, the fact of the presence and power of the Spirit of God in "the word of the truth of the gospel" but intensifies this responsibility. In the light of an intelligent faith, it causes both saint and sinner to feel more deeply the awful reality of things unseen. There is no confusion here. There is no mysticism. There is no miracle. There is not one hint of a power that will save sinners separately and apart altogether from the Gospel, without any reference to their attitude toward the Gospel. It is the grand and encouraging fact of the presence and power of God in all true preaching of the Gospel. It is His Word; it is His truth; His presence and power are in it. It is the promise of the risen Christ: "Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the world."

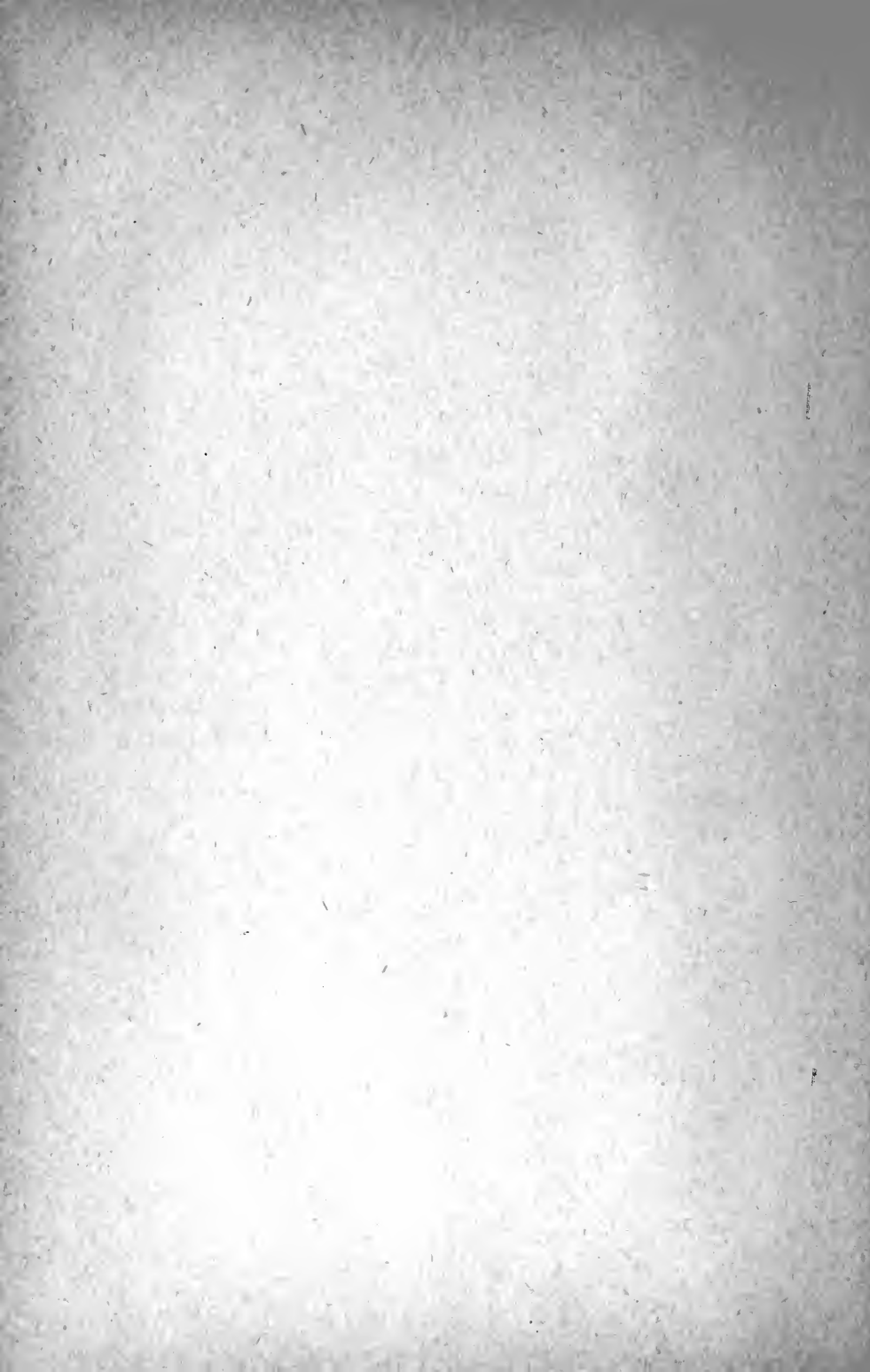
Indeed let us pray much in this protracted meeting—much prayerfulness, many prayers—in the light that the Scriptures shed. Let us continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the Gospel. As we sing and preach and exhort, let the spirit of prayer pervade it all. Let it be our firm faith that God is living, and present, and powerful in providences that will open door after door for the Word to enter the sinner's heart. Let it be our firm faith that God is living, and present, and powerful in the consecration of his people to such work in saving sinners. In praying for these providences and for this consecration, in

the presence and power of God, let us thus be praying for the unsaved, while preaching to them, as the Apostles preached, what they must do to be saved. Let us fully appreciate the place and power of prayer in evangelism.



SERMON II.

HEARING THE GOSPEL.



II.

HEARING THE GOSPEL.

“Hear, and your soul shall live.”—*Isa. lv. 3.*

A simple duty, is it not? But it may be the beginning of your salvation. Nay, in this duty of hearing, in the Bible sense of both hearing and heeding, there may be wrapt up the fullness of the blessing of Christ. It is, indeed, just this simple: that, first of all, where you sit, coming hither from night to night, you are exhorted to hear the Gospel; and it is just this full of blessing that, if you hear according to the Word of God, your soul shall live. We want to emphasize the old prophet's exhortation this second evening of these evangelistic services. So much depends on hearing. Whatever more of duty is preached to you, must grow out of this note of the Gospel. Whatever further step you take in the Way of salvation, must have before it this first step of hearing. There is the luminous promise—“Your soul shall live.” To realize it, there is the need of doing what Isaiah exhorts us to do—“Hear.”

It is a continuous and an emphatic note in the Bible. It comes in so many times, and in so many ways—now with a warning, now with a promise, then a climax of doctrine, then a picture of danger, often a Scripture of rational argument or precept, always a deep-toned voice in the ear and heart of man for

responsibility under God's judgment. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God"—there is a sublime stroke of the Gospel's power to wake man up to a sense of his obligation to God; and the simple duty and the rich promise are coupled by the lips of Jesus—"and they that hear shall live." "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" It is a scene in real life. The sword of the Spirit was puncturing the consciences of a crowd of sinners; it was done as they heard the Apostle's home-thrust proofs of the authority of Christ, the risen Lord. Such a duty of hearing, such a way of doing it, was once a chain of logic under Paul's pen. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear, without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" And the Apostle draws a conclusion that stands forever as a shining proof-text of the origin of faith, against all revival mysticisms of doctrine: "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Such a duty of hearing, the tremendous consequences of hearing, were once vividly pictured by the Master: "Every one therefore which heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, which built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall

be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house: and it fell; and great was the fall thereof."

This is not a hundreth part of the Scriptures that variedly sound the responsibility of hearing, the urgent responsibility, and the tremendous consequences. Every time, each one of these Scriptures by itself, all of them put together, spell the truth that salvation is something, first of all, to be heard. It is the voice of a herald. It is a message of good tidings. Need I stop to disprove the old-fashioned revival doctrine that a sinner is a dead quantity, so dead in sins that he can not hear? Must I take pains to elaborate Paul's teaching that faith comes of hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ? Surely the old notion is well-nigh defunct which threw a slur on what it called "book-religion," "religion learned from what a man says," "religion taught by speakers." Following the Word of God, we must see that upon every unsaved man there rests the responsibility to hear the Gospel. He can hear it; he must hear it; he is to be exhorted to hear it. That responsibility does not imply the absence of any influences of God as one hears. God is not shut out by the fact of the preacher's exhorting and warning the sinner to hear. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The power of God is in the Gospel, in the facts, the precepts, the promises of the Gospel—always there, never absent, ever present and making for the salvation of every believer. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. It is never less than the Spirit's sword, living, active, sharper and more penetrating than a Damascus blade, and quick

to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. How unreasonable to conclude that, because sinners are exhorted to hear before they are saved, before they can be saved, exhorted to hear in order that they may be saved, therefore a slight is cast upon the grace and glory of God! By no means. The responsibility of hearing is in view of the very grace of God enabling sinners to hear. The Gospel is the voice of the Son of God, a word of light and love, a word of warning, a word of promise; a word to be preached in faith and love; and all this divineness of it, the power of God, the grace of God, the love of God, creates, intensifies, irresistibly enforces the whole question of the responsibility of hearing the Gospel.

: It is not such a simple matter as one might suppose. The sinner must hear; but before he can hear, the Gospel must have been brought to his ears. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" It is not enough that this is Christendom; not enough that the Word generally prevails; not enough that Bibles are published annually by the millions, and a copy offered gratis to every destitute individual or family; not enough that chapels are built, and pulpits supplied, and pews left open and free; not enough that a congregation publishes a standing invitation for the people to come and hear. There is a duty for the Church of God to send the Gospel to the heathen who have never heard it nor heard of it. There is just as urgent a duty for the Church of God, within the bounds of Christendom, to send, to carry the Gospel to those who, while they may have heard of it, have never heard it, and do not hear it.

This is true in more ways than one: that while the

sinner must hear in order that his soul may live, the Church must first bring the Gospel to his ears. In many a rural village or neighborhood it may be true that every resident, in his life-time, has both heard of the Gospel and directly heard it. But in many a huge and crowded city this is not always the fact. The contrary fact has become so plain, and so appalling, in this generation, that it has sprung a dark problem of duty upon the followers of Christ. "How can we save the masses?"—"How can we win the non-church-goer?"—"How can we reach the vast numbers of children still outside of the Sunday-school?"—so the distressing questions are heard amid the chimes of the church bells, and the songs of praise in worshiping assemblies. It is the glaring fact that, if multitudes should suddenly desire or conclude to go to church some Lord's day morning or evening, there is not room enough to seat them—not in London, nor in New York, nor in Chicago, nor here in Lexington. It is the glaring fact, for instance in New York, that the population is thinnest in the wards where churches are thickest, and that the population is thickest in the wards where churches are thinnest. Lofty spires do not rise one after another, in their silent beauty of testimony, amid the crowded tenement houses. Sanctuary after sanctuary, breathing comfort and rest with the presence of God, does not stand invitingly open here, there, again, as men, women, and little children swarm by tens of thousands in territory a mile 'square. There they are, huddled together without churches, away from churches, never hearing the Gospel, and becoming more and more, as the statesman fears, a dangerous class in their poverty, discontent, despair—a veritable menace

to the peace of a Christian civilization. In no real sense do they hear the Gospel. Must the truth be told to our shame that, in no real sense, do they hear the Gospel, because of the Church's neglect to bring it to their ears? It is the problem of city evangelization. How shall our cities be evangelized?—the cry is raised, showing a new, strange depth of duty in the Great Commission. "Go ye into all the world," said the Master; and, in one light, there is not far to go: a teeming world is near by our door, under our eye, almost within sound of our voice, a world that close which has never been wholly evangelized. "He that believeth and is baptized," said the Master; and Paul's logic becomes a fire of rebuke to hundreds of churches for their neglect of the children of God scattered in alleys and slums—"How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?"

That is one of the lights in which the duty first shines for the Church of God, on its part, to see that the Gospel is brought to the sinner's ears, that he may hear and be saved. But this duty of the Church shines in another direction, toward another unevangelized part of humanity. Who are they? They are a larger number than we may have supposed. They are not paupers. They are not in want. They are not all struggling in the dark to make a living. They are by no means universally involved as a class or classes in the problems of socialism. More generally they feel sure of their self-sufficiency as individuals. But they do not go to church. They make up an army of non-church-goers. Many a time he is an honest, sober,

industrious mechanic—but he does not attend church. Often he is a prosperous merchant—but he does not attend church. Too frequently, alas! he is a young man, beginning his life work, fired with the ambitions of some worldly success—but he does not attend church. They make a large number when all counted together. All of them have heard of the Gospel. Most all of them have so heard it as to know their responsibility under it. But they do not hear it any longer.

I proclaim to-night the duty of Christians toward both of these classes. I proclaim our duty to these fellow-men who do not hear the Gospel. If, after we have done our duty, they will not hear, but straightout refuse to hear, then we may sorrowfully say, "Your blood be upon your own heads; our consciences are clean." Our duty to these classes—it is the same toward both. It is the same simple duty to both, whether one be Lazarus, and the other Dives; whether one be a poor, sick beggar, and the other a rich fool. The same simple duty—so I mean it and emphasize it. It is the duty of going to all these non-church-goers as men, and dealing with them as men—not as rich nor poor, not as high nor low, not as miserable nor comfortable, not as cowed nor self-sufficient, but directly and primarily as fellow-men for whom Christ died. Let us have less and less of this talk about "masses" and "classes," in any exclusive significations. I know, on the one hand, there are problems of poverty and labor intricately connected with the evangelization of our cities. I am just as sure, on the other hand, it is just as serious a matter to be doing our duty to evangelize an immense number that are

practically at ease on matters of a livelihood. You may say that thousands of our fellow-creatures need something besides Gospel revivals. You yourself know that they need something more than soup-houses; and you know that there are far more of our fellows that have bread enough, and to spare, who need rather to hear the old truth, "Man shall not live by bread alone."

It cannot be denied that evangelism often necessarily means, both in heathendom and Christendom, both in Bilaspur and Lexington, feeding the hungry, medicating the sick, teaching the ignorant equally letters and morals, truly civilizing them while evangelizing them. Let us all honestly and plainly see the need of more legislation, the need of more education, the need of mightier and wiser organization, that this human life, between the cradle and the grave, may be made more tolerable for swarms of God's creatures. But the Gospel of the glory of God, the Gospel of Christ and Him crucified, the Gospel of light and love, this Gospel not for "masses" nor for "classes," but for "the whole creation," for a man as such, for a woman as such, for a child as such, each one duly and responsibly hearing it for himself and herself; deeper than any fact of environment, more than a match for any condition of society, the beacon for every step of progress in civilization afterwards, as it regenerates the individual and reforms the world—this is the Apostolic standard of truth and victory, set up in the wilds of Galatia, on the Areopagus in Athens, amid the hovels in Corinth, in Cæsar's household in Rome.

Our duty is plain enough—what we have to do that the unevangelized of this city may hear the Word of life. It is duty so far that we hold these special serv-

ices every night, here in the Lord's house, in this old historic building, so accessibly situated, so roomy; here, the pews always free, a cordial invitation extended to all. We have a right to expect it, we shall not be disappointed. that many will be drawn hither, assured of a welcome, glad to hear the sweet songs of Zion, and feeling unmistakably the presence of the Holy Spirit in light and love. You are already in attendance, many of you, to whom the voice may be imperatively spoken—"Hear, and your soul shall live." We may thank God for such a large audience, and take courage. But more, alas! more, far, far more are on the outside. They do not care that they may hear. They do not care to come. They roam the streets. They gossip in idle crowds. They frequent saloons and gambling hells. They ply their trades amid the cares of this world. Or, what is so sad, a stern reminder to you and me, many are sick, poor, burdened, ill-clad, cast down, helpless and hopeless: it would be a miracle of courage for them to come and hear. We must go to all these. We must go on the outside to those that do not come to us. The Master speaks the duty for us to go out and constrain such to come in. The Gospel is for the public assembly; the Gospel is for the individual by the wayside. In the highways and hedges, from house to house, warning every man, teaching every man—I hold up this manner of Christ, this Apostolic manner, not in the spirit of cant, not as a rhetorical flourish to ease our consciences, but as a picture for duty, an appeal for duty, in this evangelistic work. We can do it, if we will. Here, night after night, publicly; everywhere, day after day, privately—so let the good work be done. Will you do

your duty ? Will you ? Will you ? Do not exhort officially. Do not speak patronizingly. Pray for the opportunity. Pray for wisdom. Pray for courage. Do you go to that bed-ridden sinner in sympathy and cheer ; and you to that wayward youth ; and you to that careless neighbor ; and you to that skeptical partner in business ; and you to your own son and daughter ; and you to your own husband : let us all consecrate ourselves before God for some such special mission and message, to tell the Gospel story to those that do not hear it, or to win them hither that they may hear it. Let us never doubt but God will guide us. He will open the way. He will bless us in our purpose, if first need be to make us better in life, an example for that one to whom we long and pray to speak.

When, however, the people have come together, if not as the city of Antioch came in Paul's day, to hear the Word of God, almost the whole city, yet a house full as we behold to-night, there arises another signal duty in regard to the prophet's exhortation. We are to be careful that nothing is done that will hinder or obstruct the possibility of the sinner's hearing the Gospel. The methods of evangelism, general and special, in idea and detail—not one of them must be allowed to dull the ears of the sinner under the Gospel's message ; every one of them must be made to help him to hear his need of salvation, and to feel his responsibility to accept the invitation of the Saviour. Have we not all seen obstructive methods used in revival services—of course, not purposely used, yet the practical effect just that, sadly enough ? The effect was to make the sinner quiescent, passive ; and if he was exhorted to do anything, it was to do everything but respons-

ibly hear and heed the Gospel. The phrases current in such a revival indicate the methods. "Altar exercises," "mourner's bench," "anxious seat"—so the phrases run. The sinner has been invited to kneel night after night at the altar for prayer, and for nothing but prayer. He has taken his place regularly among the company of mourners, and steadily, genuinely mourning, still has not been comforted. He has been exhorted to come to the anxious seat, that he may show his great anxiety for salvation. Such methods, applied, repeated, filling most of the time in a service, have blurred or ignored the duty, the especial, distinct duty of men to hear the Gospel, their immediate responsibility to hear what the Spirit of truth has to say unto them. And the methods go on multiplying, branching off this way or that way, sometimes becoming almost trifles, undignified, unworthy of the Gospel, marring its beauty, totally silencing its appeal to the heart and conscience.

The scholarly and orthodox Phelps, of Andover, instructing preachers, trenchantly criticises these revival customs. He calls them "trivialities," "acts of religious substitution," "deceptive substitutions." He shows that the danger of them is to get men into the habit of regarding as duties customs that block the way to the great duty of deciding for eternal life. He is right. The more we see of these revival methods, in the light of Apostolic conversions, the more it appears that they hinder, delay, very often help not one step the power of the Gospel to convict and convert. What good is done by simply asking persons to arise who "desire to go to Heaven when they die"? Is it not time lost, requesting "all that wish success in the

protracted meeting," to come forward and give the preachers a hand of good-will? How does it help on the salvation of anyone by urging him, if he wants to be saved, to hold up his right hand? Why should we stop over with inviting persons, vaguely and indefinitely, if they would "like to have the prayers of God's people," to send in the name on a written request?

Phelps well and wisely urges "Apostolic policy in the conduct of revivals," as against these "indeterminate acts," "acts of apparent self-committal," "acts which fall short of God's requirements." This does not mean, in a hard and fast sense, that we may not have, in evangelistic meetings, expedients nor customs not used by the Apostles. More expedients and customs different from theirs we may have, in the large, wise liberty of the Gospel. The power of the Gospel is not so bound. But it does mean that every custom, expedient, method, usage, manner, all must have the spirit and purpose of the Gospel in them. That grave purpose makes for the conviction of men as they hear, believe, repent, obey. So was Apostolic preaching. So were Apostolic conversions. Such was "Apostolic policy in the conduct of revivals." The Apostles said nothing, advised nothing, did nothing that would blur the free invitation of the Gospel to all—nothing that kept them from pressing the Gospel home on the sinner's heart, to convict him then and there of his need of salvation, and of his responsibility to accept it immediately on the promises of God's grace. This was the first need of humanity, the first note of the Apostolic Gospel. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words"—such was Peter's prime exhortation on the remarkable day of Pentecost. "God made choice among you,

that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel, and believe"—such was Peter's story of the conversion of Gentiles.

We are going to walk in this light, we are going to work to this end, throughout this series of meetings. "Hear, and your soul shall live"—here is the beginning of duty, and here is the fullness of blessing. What comes in between, whatever is said, known, felt, done, everything must point and lead straight from the duty to the blessing. There must be no asides, no delays, no interruptions, no time taken up in "indeterminate acts," nothing that will not urge the love of God as it makes the sinner responsible to accept immediately a salvation of grace. Certainly while we preach, and while you are exhorted to hear, we shall pray. Oh! yes, this is the work of God. We are co-workers with Him. We depend on Him for strength, guidance, consecration. We shall pray—pray often, pray fervently, for all: for you, and for ourselves. But we shall not make prayer an obstruction. We shall not, we dare not, pray that God will save you by a miracle, apart from the Gospel, before you hear it and without your hearing it. We shall pray for His providences, for every grace needed to open a door that the Gospel may win your ear and convert your heart. We shall sing for your salvation—sing the Gospel, that its light and love may be music in your soul, persuading you to come to the Saviour without delay. We shall be ready to help you in any special manner—if you have any special inquiries to make concerning the Way, if there are particular doubts that need to be dissolved, if there are trials in your life that call for instruction and prayer. But, mark it! any and

all of these various methods must agree and work with the prime standard, the Gospel preached, heard, believed, obeyed. In the Gospel is the power of God; in the Gospel is the sword of the Spirit. Prayer, song, inquiry, hearing, counsel, study, guidance—all of them are under the Gospel of the grace of God, as it is preached to guilty sinners, as they are responsible for hearing it and accepting it, to their salvation.

All of this is plain, is it not? Is it not the truth? Is it not at once scriptural and reasonable? Is it not as beautiful as it is reasonable, this Way of salvation opening clearly before our eyes? Behold, then, your responsibility, just as clear and reasonable. It is two-fold. "Take heed what ye hear"—"Take heed therefore how ye hear." What you hear—how you hear. You want to hear the Word; not the traditions of the schools, but the truth; not the doctrines and commandments of men, but the Gospel. You want to hear "the word of the truth of the Gospel," as Paul summarily describes it. It is a Gospel of light—"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." It is a Gospel of love—"God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." It is a Gospel of grace—"Justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." It is a Gospel of truth—"These [signs] are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." It is a Gospel of facts—"For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised again the third day according to the

scriptures." It is a Gospel of universality—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation." It is a Gospel of precepts—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." It is a Gospel of promises—"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." It is a Gospel of character—"Let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ."

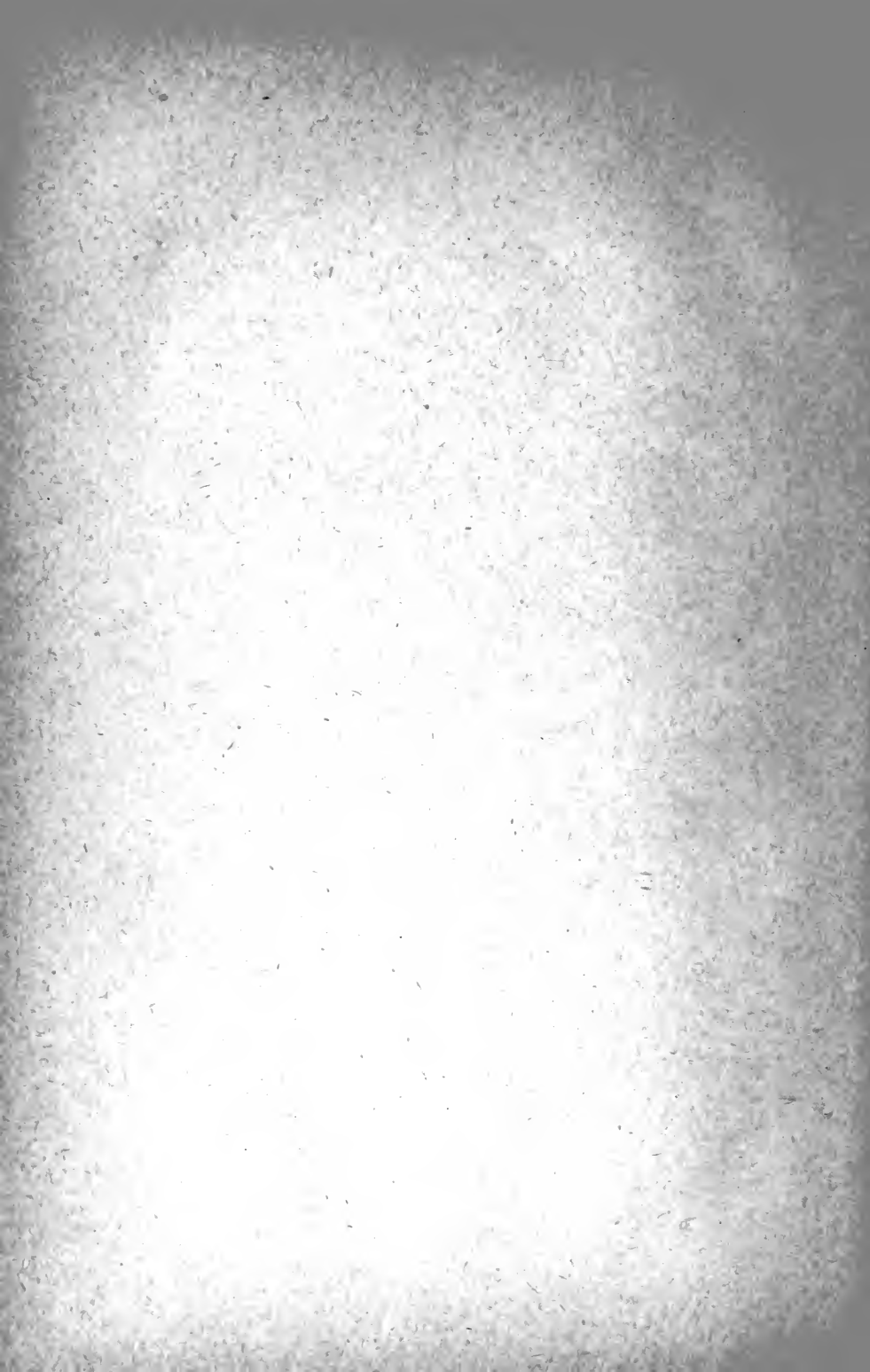
This is the Gospel to be heard and preached during this meeting. It is what every sinner ought to hear in every evangelistic service. It is what you have a right to hear, and what you ought to see that you do hear—a clear Gospel, not clouded; a definite Gospel, not vague; a complete Gospel, not emasculated; a Gospel of life, not of frigid dogma or rigid system. As you hear, you can think and judge for yourself, responsible to God alone. The Gospel of His glory, it is for the good of man. Coming from Him, it is a Gospel of love and grace; and just as surely, meant for you and me, it is a Gospel of facts, precepts, promises—facts for us to believe, precepts for us to obey, promises for us to enjoy. And would we have a Scripture, a clear, broad, beautiful Scripture, in whose depths this Gospel of glory shines, its light and beauty unshaded by a single cloud, undisturbed by a single ripple, here it is: "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all

iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works."

"Take heed what ye hear," but just as duly "Take heed how ye hear." You are to listen and learn while you hear. Hearing the Gospel is no thoughtless, irresponsible impression of catch-words and sepulchral tones. Salvation does not seize upon a man unknowingly, to his own surprise. I repeat, you are to listen and learn while you hear. Attention, judgment, knowledge, be sure, are involved in one's salvation. The influence of God, too—indeed, indeed so; let us not forget it once in this meeting. "No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him"—it is Christ's own word. Those drawings of God, sweet, gentle, ceaseless—how blessed to know and feel them! And hear how he draws us! "It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me." Hearing, listening—hearing so attentively that you intelligently learn the Way—then are you taking heed how you hear as well as what you hear. Keep on hearing, I beg you. Do not listen just once, and then go your way, not to return. Do not hear, as the Holy Spirit strives with you, and guiltily resist His strivings. Keep on hearing. Learn truth after truth. See light after light. Receive the inflow of God's love in your heart. Yield, turn, follow wherever your Saviour leads. So hearing, your soul shall live.

SERMON III.

REPENTANCE.



III.

REPENTANCE.

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."—*Luke xxiv. 47.*

In all true evangelistic preaching, the Way of salvation ought to appear clearer and clearer with every sermon. This is a capital note of these meetings, the clearness of the Way, to be heard over and over. No one should be left ignorant nor inquiring. All uncertainty should be dissipated. Every doubt should be dissolved. The light of the Gospel should be an unclouded light for the sinner's anxiety and need. And all the time, too, in showing this clear way, we shall be impressed by another remarkable fact, if we preach the Gospel as the Apostles preached it. The clearness of salvation and the motives of salvation go impressively together. The Gospel shows the sinner, not only what he must do to be saved, but why he should do it, and how he must do it. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, because it is both light and motive; its light and motive are verily the power of God.

Here it is, unmistakably: "Repentance and remission of sins"—there is the duty of the sinner, and there is the blessing for him. So were duty and blessing preached by the Apostles, beginning from Jerusalem on that notable day of Pentecost. The duty was clear, the blessing was immediately ready. But read on,

"Should be preached in his name." There is the motive of it all. It is a Gospel for both head and heart. There is light for man's ignorance, and there is strength for man's weakness. The commandment of God is proclaimed to man, "that they should all everywhere repent." But it is no cold, abstract commandment of duty, terrifying the sinner's heart, and leaving him cowed and helpless, to repent as best he can. The light of man's duty shines in the larger light of God's love, and the truth falls gently upon the heart: "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance."

All this we want to hear and hold together this evening. "Repentance and remission of sins,"—the duty and the blessing; but "in his name"—the motive. The more deeply you feel your responsibility to repent, the more keenly will you feel your need of the name of Christ, to repent thoroughly and savingly. Surely what we all desire here to-night is sincerity of purpose and deed. It is no time for hasty action. Surface work will not answer. Gospel repentance is no light matter. You do not want to be deceived, nor misled, nor kept waiting in doubt; but certainly you do not want to repent in a half-hearted, impulsive way. It is, indeed, something strangely pathetic—these wayward, these feeble desires to be better. I might ask the question, in genuine sympathy, Do you not want to be a better man? a better woman? a better child? And I am sure that heart after heart would stir with a tiny flame anyhow; bruised and battered lives would look around and move a little; even downright wicked persons might stop and listen for a moment. But if repentance is to have its perfect work, it must be in the name of Jesus Christ. Nothing short of that name,

its light, its character, its power, its authority, can make you and me repent soundly. Gospel repentance is something far more than chance desires of being good. It is something surer than just swearing off from sin now and then, and afterwards wallowing in the mire more filthily than ever. It is something happier and brighter than cold, stoical efforts to cure our faults by ourselves, without any concern for the evil that lurks away down secretly in the depths of our hearts.

The history of missions will make this clear to us. More than a hundred years ago the Moravian missionaries, in their work of faith and toil of love, landed among the icy mountains of Greenland. There they preached—what? Honest, devoted men of God, they thought that they were preaching as they ought to preach. They thought that a sinner, a heathen, needed to hear not the Gospel first, but the Law. The Law must first convict him of sin, and slay him; and then he would be ready to hear the Gospel of salvation. Not Christ first, but Moses—not Calvary, but Sinai, was the order. They thought that only by the Law could come at all the knowledge of sin. So they preached; and the more they so preached, proclaiming only the Law of righteousness and its voice of condemnation for every transgressor, the more they wondered at the result. The Greenlanders acknowledged their sins; but the acknowledgment? Somehow it lacked depth, warmth, tears. There was no broken heart, no contrite spirit. The poor heathen saw that he had not always done right, so his conscience accused him; and he saw that he needed to be better. But he did not see the need deeply, searchingly, thoroughly. There was no upheaval of life in him. He was not moved,

intelligently and powerfully moved, to repent. One day one of them entered the hut of a missionary, where the latter was translating the Bible. The Scripture was the story of the crucifixion of the Saviour. When the Greenlander curiously inquired what was going on, the preacher, from some cause, began to read the story of the Cross, and to tell its meaning. Strange to say, and yet not strange to say, a human heart was touched—the fountain of tears was broken up—again a mortal man could see Christ openly set forth crucified—again a sinner could say, “He died for me;” and there was great joy in Greenland.

When Jesus Christ said that repentance should be preached in His name, He meant it. His name is the only reason and power that can cause one to repent radically and thoroughly. The Cross is the light for us all to behold sin in, and for us to study our own sins by. The background of our guilt looks all the darker around the pure life and precious self-sacrifice of the Son of God. The thunder of Sinai is not as powerful to convict us of sin as the silent suffering of Calvary. “In his name”—not in the name of Moses—so the Apostles preached, and so God granted repentance unto life. The Gospel as fulfilling the righteousness of the Law; God commending His own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; the grace of God bringing salvation to all men, and teaching self-denial and a new life—these are the constant notes of the New Covenant, both to Jew and Gentile. Let us see more and more how it is that the name of Christ works this deep and genuine repentance, along with the remission of sins.

What, then, is repentance, and how much is it, in

the name of Christ? What is it that you feel and do in repenting? What is it as truth in Scripture and as experience in life? We need not wonder that, if a popular definition of it were called for, an answer would be loosely given that it is sorrow for sin. Well, there can be no repentance without sorrow for sin. That is very true. But you might be sorry for your sins and yet not repent. You might sorrow for a long time, and keenly, and yet not repent. You might shed rivers of tears, and yet not repent. You might grieve over your wrong-doing, until your heart ached, and you were driven almost distracted, and yet not repent. You might feel wounded and sore and unspeakably sad, in a dumb agony of regret, and yet not repent. Your sins might arise before you and torment your conscience, and bring you heavy days and sleepless nights, and still there might never be repentance.

This is altogether intelligible. It is true in God's Word, and it is true in life. Listen! One of the most solemn phrases of the Bible is this—"the sorrow of the world." Paul uses it in the very Scripture where he is teaching a note of repentance. He says: "Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret; but the sorrow of the world worketh death." There is the doctrine, deeply and awfully true to life. "The sorrow of the world"—the like of it was seen in Judas. Do you remember how he felt and did after his betrayal of the Master? When he saw the Master condemned, a change came over the traitor. A torrent of regret surged back upon his soul. The thirty pieces of silver burnt his fingers. He brought back the money to the chief priests and elders, and he came not only feeling his guilt, but confess-

ing it—"I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood." Sorrow for sin, even confession—what came of it all? "And he cast down the pieces of silver into the sanctuary, and departed; and he went away, and hanged himself." Remorse and suicide! "The sorrow of the world worketh death."

Let men be careful that their sorrow for sin is something better than worldly sorrow. There is so much of that, and it does no good. It is a sorrow poisoned through and through with pride. It may be just a bad feeling that one has because his sin has found him out. He feels uncomfortable when the eyes of the town are upon him, and everybody looks at him or points at him as a marked man. His name is stained, and his self-respect is thereby wounded. Self—self—self, in a dark, dark shadow of regret that at last deepens into midnight gloom—this may be the picture of one's sorrow over one's sins, the sorrow of desperation and despair. We are not to deceive ourselves by regrets and tears. Sentimentally feeling bad is not going to bring us salvation. Be careful how you indulge such superficial feelings. Have you wept when you have heard some anecdote of a death-bed? Have you started a little as the memory of past immorality pricked your conscience? Do you shudder when the dread reality of God's judgment fills your mind for an instant? Are you possibly feeling more or less compunctions of heart as a confessed sinner? It may be all selfish sorrow. It may do you no good. It may turn out the sorrow of the world that worketh death.

Repentance is something more than sorrow for sin. It is something more than feeling bad and shedding tears because we have sinned. Repentance grows out

of sorrow ; but that sorrow is what Paul calls "godly sorrow," "sorrow according to God." "Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret." As much as I insistently teach that repentance is more than sorrow, because I do not want you to stop with being sorry for your sins, and especially selfishly sorry, I would not have you get the impression that sorrow for sin is of little account. Nay ; we can not be too sorrowful over our sins, if we sorrow "according to God." "Godly sorrow" there must be, deep and full, in every genuine conversion.

It means, simply and beautifully, does it not, a sorrow in which God is ? Already, in the beginning of that great change within, God is there. The light of His love shines in the sinner's heart. Sinners are not left to themselves, to hear awful voices of judgment, and to tremble and weep while they feel their guilt, and try to work up a sufficient degree of penitence, in fear of the Judge of the universe. God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself ; and the ministry of reconciliation is ever a ministry of light and love, in which the sinner may repent, and be saved. Sorrow, sorrow for sin there is to be in the sinner's heart, as deep as life or thought, but never a throb of penitence in which the love of God is not felt, never a tear in which the light of God does not shine. The sorrow of the world is morbid, bitter ; but godly sorrow is sweet and relieving and healing. No ; you can not sorrow too much over your sinful life, if it is the name of Christ that works in your heart, and convinces you of your great need of the great salvation. Christ shows you and me what we are ; and He shows us ourselves in the light of what He is, and what you and I ought to be in becom-

ing like Him. That suffering, that death, that rising again from the dead, were all to enable us to repent in His name—to repent with His sacrifice for sin working in our hearts, renewing the very springs of our lives, and starting a new growth of goodness through our characters—to repent in a surety of authority and experience, both what Christ does for us and what He does in us, so that the repentance might be unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret. Let the sorrow have its perfect work. Do not wipe away a single tear. Pray rather with the Psalmist, “Put thou my tears into thy bottle.” Come and kneel at the Saviour’s feet, and wet them with your tears. Let every sin call for a tear. But (oh! blessed thought) let it be a sorrow of tears, healthy while full, hopeful while humbling, because it is according to God, as you behold the light of His love in giving His Son to die for you, that you might be saved.

Here, then, is the repentance, distinctly. It is something more than sorrow. Godly sorrow produces it. It is simply, but surely, a change of will—a change of will for the better. Deeper than tears, more than sorrow, more than surgings of emotion, it is the radical work of the Gospel on the will. Something must come of the tears, something must come of the sorrow. It is godly sorrow, so genuine, so powerful, working its way down to the center of moral responsibility, melting the hardness, electrifying the motives, until the prodigal child is convinced, persuaded, aroused, and speaks aloud the great change within—“I will arise, and go to my Father.” How strikingly and beautifully that is described in the Parable! There he sat in his rags, hungry, starving, lonely, deserted. And as he

sat there among the swine, "he came to himself." That tells the story. A man comes to himself in the extremity of his need. It is the picture of the true spirit of a man in any serious need of life. We are never ready to appreciate any kind of blessing until we come to ourselves—until we see how helpless we are, alone, unaided, uncheered, to be anything or to do any thing in this world. If one wants to be a scholar, he must come to a deep sense of his own ignorance, in comparison with the universe of knowledge, before he is really ready to learn and to know. If you would do good to humanity in its very lowly calls for help, you are not prepared, not qualified in heart, to do such service, until you have been humbled before the mountains of difficulties that encompass all wise philanthropy. We never appreciate one another in love or friendship until we see uncloudedly what life would be bereft of such companionship and care. In all these ways and experiences we may come to ourselves; and we can look up, and around, and above, and we see how little each one is in himself, by himself, how dependent on others and on things about us for every good.

Man's greatest need is God—His life, His love. You come to yourself as, in some serious hour, you feel how poor, and hungry, and helpless, and wretched you are without Him. That experience may come in different ways. It may come in some awful deed of sin, barefaced crime before the community; or in the hard struggle against a devilish temptation where you at last give up in despair; or in the bankruptcy of your worldly fortunes; or by the little grave where all your earthly hopes are buried. It may come not suddenly, but slowly, slowly, up through the well-taught,

well-reared life of a young man or a young woman, in which there has been no deep ploughing of sin, but where there has been a quiet, silent, spiritual growth amid common trials and disciplines, the faith of motherhood becoming the faith of childhood, the faith of the child the faith of the man, and a life of large thought and daily prayer and pious culture of the heart more and more deeply realizing, by its very possession of God, how miserable and lost it would be without Him.

The prodigal son came to himself. In that self-revelation, where his poor, forlorn life stood out before his eyes in all its nakedness and helplessness, there arose the fact of his father's house, his father's love, and bread to spare. He saw it all, saw it as never before; utterly hungry and destitute, felt how much that home and comfort were to him, as he ejaculated, "and I perish with hunger." Then came the climax. Then came the crisis. Then came the change. Then and there he repented. When he felt most deeply his sin and guilt, how guilty and undeserving he was, felt it most keenly in the very light of his father's love, he repented—"I will arise, and go to my father." That was repentance, the very moment, the very truth, the very experience. It was the radical change of his will. It was the radical change of his will, produced in the sense of his utter helplessness, the light of his father's love shining over him, and the fact of that far-off home drawing him. It was the radical change of his will, spoken aloud and heard beyond the stars—"I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."

That is the example for every sinner, the example of repentance in its crisis and genuineness. Do you feel that you are a sinner? Do you feel your sins haunting your conscience, and holding you to dread account? Do you see how far short you have come of duty both to God and man? Does the Gospel of the glory of God show you to yourself, and make your poverty of spirit and imperfection of character stand out glaringly? But do you, oh! do you, behold the Fatherhood of God, made so plain in His Son Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave Himself up for us? Does not that love, that sacrifice for sin, touch you—humble you—soften you—draw you? Does not the name of Christ beget in you a sweet and godly sorrow, and gently open the fountain of tears? Do you not long, hungrily long, to be forgiven and saved? Now is your time, if those feelings of guilt and sorrow and hunger are there. It is the crisis of your life. The commandment of God comes to you more searchingly than ever, Repent! Here, this night, before you leave this house, you need to repent. Guilty, sorrowful, needy, you ought to repent. You ought to say out of an honest heart, feeling its guilt of past sins, but just as deeply feeling its responsibility to accept the present salvation, you ought to say—"I will arise, and go to my Father." Do not let those feelings die away and leave you unsaved. Do not let this serious hour pass, and nothing good come of it. With sorrow in your soul, with tears in your eyes, the goodness of God leading you, repent here and now. Let that simple, distinct crisis of responsibility have its way. Convicted, persuaded, unresisting, yielding, surrendering,

speaking as you feel, in the spirit of the old song, "Lord, I give myself to thee; 't is all that I can do."

That is repentance—the time, the truth, the experience. It is the radical change of your will. It shows itself, it proves itself, in what immediately follows, and continuously follows. When the prodigal son of the Parable repented, when he spoke the deep change of his heart and will, "I will arise, and go to my father," then the story reads at once, "And he arose, and came to his father." That is what you will do to-night, if you genuinely repent. You will arise, and confess Christ as your Saviour and Lord. That is what God's Word calls "doing works worthy of repentance." Sorrow—repentance—reformation—here is repentance in origin and result. It originates in godly sorrow; it results in reformation of life. Sorrow, the change of heart—repentance, the change of will—reformation, the change of conduct,—this is the lucid order of the teaching of the Gospel. And the Gospel insists on the last as well as on the first or the second. That is the reason that we must insist, too, on the result of repentance. So will its genuineness be proved. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance"—we need to hear that. "Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance"—that is a capital note also to be sounded in preaching the Gospel.

John the Baptist sounded it distinctly. A preacher of repentance, "preaching the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins," as the multitudes went out to be baptized by him, he warned them, "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance." He compared life to a tree. There at the root was the axe of judgment. "Every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire." He

preached in figures; but he applied his figures to the plain prose of duty. Here came the multitudes, in their excitement, asking him, "What then must we do?" And the answer was ready, just what they needed to do—"He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise." It was a straight lesson in unselfishness. And the publicans, the greedy tax-gatherers, they came to be baptized, inquiring, "Master, what must we do?" They heard their sin; they heard their duty—"Extort no more than that which is appointed you." Soldiers, in active service, under drill and command every day, they are drawn to the wonderful preacher of righteousness, and ask, with a stir of new feelings, "And we, what must we do?" "Do violence to no man, neither exact anything wrongfully; and be content with your wages." "Fruits worthy of repentance"—reformation of conduct, how we appear before others, what we do to others—that was the religion of life preached to the eager crowd on the banks of the Jordan. It was a lesson of charity and philanthropy. It was a duty of honesty and justice. It was a standard of self-control and contentment. That kind of life would prove whether men had duly repented or not.

So also was the preaching of Jesus. Did He shield a poor adulteress, as her accusers were ready to stone her to death? Did He shame them, as He Himself, in His spotless chastity, felt ashamed for them, blushing, as He stooped and wrote on the ground? Did He gently look upon the woman when the accusers silently stole away, and did He speak the superabundant grace of God, "Neither do I condemn thee: go thy way"?

It was spoken in a love that immediately touched the conscience and braced the will of the poor creature, both to repent and reform—"From henceforth sin no more." Did His mercy, His condescension, His sweet companionship, His lovable humanity, win the publican Zacchæus? "Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house"—is that the sight, the simple word, the overflowing spirit of love, that warmed the heart of the extortionate tax-gatherer, and melted him to repentance? Hear this whole-hearted pledge of reformation immediately made—"Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold."

So, also, was the Apostolic preaching. It caused the Ephesian sorcerers to bring the books of their trade, and make a bonfire of their iniquity, as they believed and were saved. It made the rough Philippian jailer tender in feeling and kind of hand, as he washed the stripes of the imprisoned preachers by whom he was baptized. It terrified the worldly Felix as he heard Paul reason of righteousness and self-control, and the judgment to come. Paul could congratulate the Corinthians on what they had become through the redemption of the Gospel. Some of them once fornicators, idolators; thieves, drunkards, extortioners, this was the note of congratulation that implied the reformation worthy of the repentance as it was produced by the Gospel of all grace—"But ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."

We hear the call for ethical preaching. It is a reasonable call. We hear the demand for a revival of

righteousness. It is an altogether just demand. The Gospel of grace is a Gospel of morality. It preaches repentance in the name of Christ—the change of mind, heart, will; and that change must bear fruit in a new life. Let sinners mark the result. Let them see that the reformation of conduct must also appear. What is it that you need to do? What has been your bosom sin? Where must you specially cease to do evil, and learn to do right? Do you swear? do you take the name of God in vain? has the use of by-words become a habit with you? Or is drunkenness your failing? is the appetite for strong drink a raging thirst in your veins, so now by long indulgence, or, alas! inherited as a taint in the blood? Have you been dishonest in trade, or betrayed the trusts of others? Is your temper a fiery one, and has your tongue dropped wrath? Does selfishness beset you, perhaps coarse, perhaps amiable and æsthetic, so that it would be a very revolution in your life to think of others and do them good? Have you been unthankful? discontented? disagreeable? Do these words sound too pointed, too severe, for the children present? Do the questions sum up more sins and crimes than their young lives have known? And yet there is a repentance even for children. The Gospel has a message also for them.

A young boy lay upon his sick-bed, convalescing, after the long battle with fever, weak, pale, thoughtful. One day he called his devoted mother to his side, and asked her to bend down; he had something to tell her. And with his thin arms around her neck, he spoke from the heart—“Mamma, I am so glad that I am going to get well; I was not always a good boy when I was well; I used to say naughty words when I played with the

other boys ; but I have asked God to forgive me, and I am going to be a better boy when I get up again." Do we doubt there was joy in Heaven over that child's repentance as he found his way back to duty, believing in the goodness and grace of God? Yes, the young heart may have its simple sorrow, and may repent in the light of a Saviour's love, and may begin building a spiritual character. These are some of the needs of the hour—one of this person, another of that person, and so on. Let them be duly emphasized, without any slurring whatever. Let each one think of himself, not of his neighbor. As the grace of God brings us salvation, let us hear its doctrine, its discipline, that we are to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, godly in this present world. Joining the Church—making a profession of religion—being baptized, what is the good of it unless the heart is in it, and a new life comes from it? Tears are idle, feelings are worse than wasted, and leave you harder than ever, if the will energized by the strength of the might of God, does not directly and persistently aim to break off sins by righteousness. While you sorrow, pray, repent, and receive the promises of the Gospel, it ought all to be a purpose and a joy that tell on your conduct before the world, in your family, wherever you are seen and known, so that you could say in all good conscience—"I know that I am a better man." That is the life worthy of your repentance.

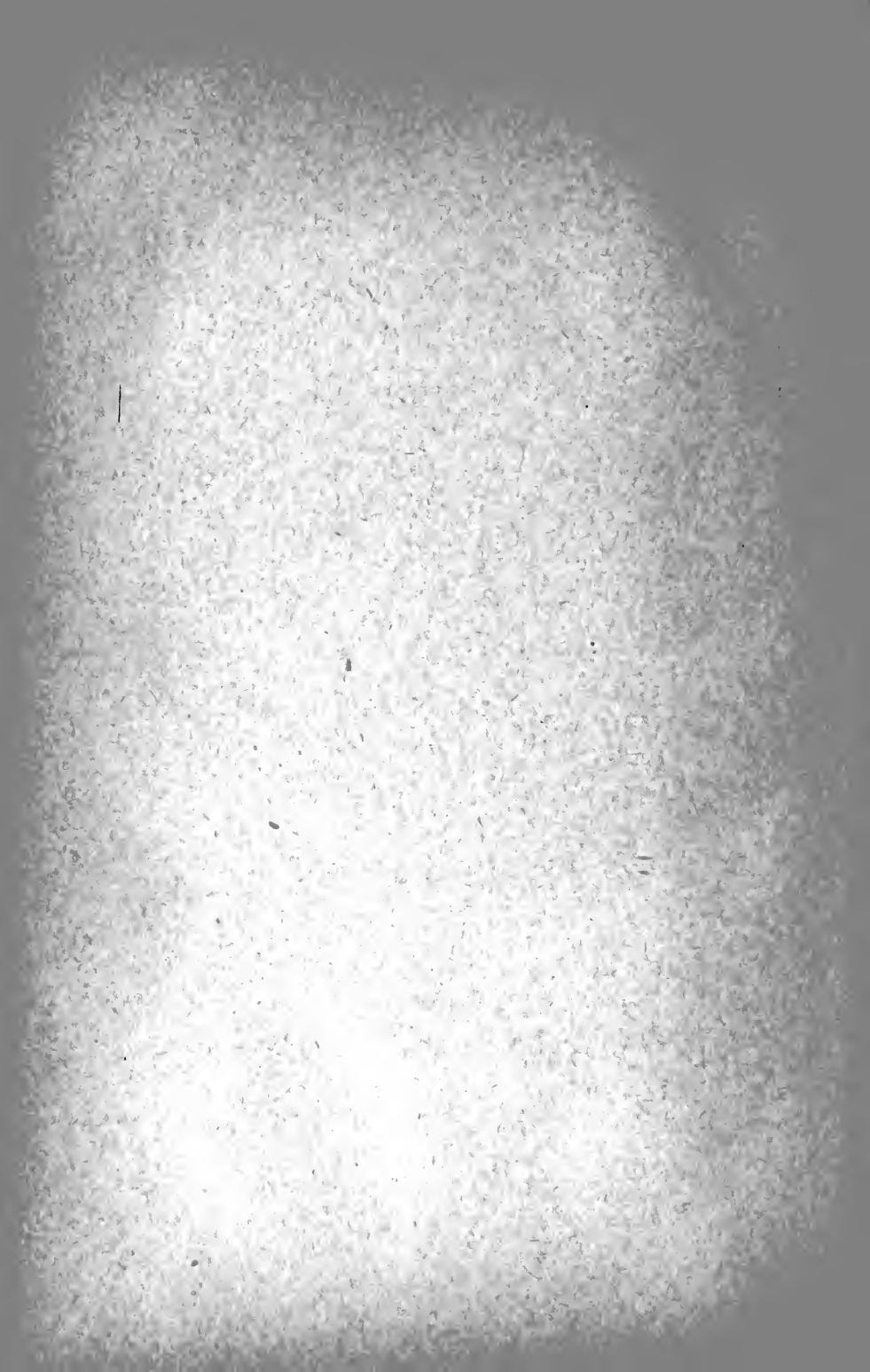
But let us, let us, I beg you, keep all the truths of the Gospel before us—the new life, and the motive for it ; the intense morality of Christian character, and its health and inspiration from repentance in the name of Christ. Do not agonize in remorse over your sins.

Do not close your eyes in blind sorrow as you feel your guilt. Certainly not. And do not expect to cure every fault you have the hour you are forgiven, nor be surprised if the fact confronts you that you have a conflict with evil yet to be endured. You do not repent once for all. Repentance is a life-long duty. It is a daily duty. The deepest feeling of sorrow for sin is yet to come. It will come, as your old faults harass you, and perhaps bring you to the dust. It will come especially as you better understand your own heart—the evil ever lurking there: that experience of humility, prayer, self-renouncement, which is known fully only as one sees the highest good, and sees more and more that he can attain it only in the grace and strength of God. Expect to repent every day—every day fresh purposes, fresh resolutions, a new will to do right, as you aspire, “All my springs are in thee.” Begin this very hour. If there is godly sorrow for sin, if there is the hunger to be forgiven, if there is a desire to be better, that is the auspicious beginning. Let the goodness of God lead you to repentance.



SERMON IV.

FAITH AND LIFE.



IV.

FAITH AND LIFE.

"And that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and who gave himself up for me."—*Gal. ii. 20.*

Faith and life—so the two are brought together in this vital, vivid Scripture. It is the Scripture of Scriptures concerning faith. This human life lived in faith, which centers in the Son of God—there is faith in its truest and best condition, and there is life strong and satisfying. It is an intense, personal, living faith—person to person, life to life, and faith the medium of the two. This man who lives and believes gathers up all the conviction and all the energy of his being to express the faith of his life. It is not a dreamy mood of which he is speaking, nor the rare visitations of high thoughts, but of his level, every-day existence. "That life which I now live in the flesh," says Paul, declaring how lowly and how real is his experience. "I live in faith," he explicitly confesses, while marking the breadth, the fullness, the energy and intensity, of his experience. "The faith which is in the Son of God," so he describes the reality of the object of his faith; again, how real and personal his faith as it rests upon a real, living Person. "Who loved me and gave himself up for me,"—so it is a faith, living, personal, real, broad, full, intense, which first finds this Person Himself living this human life, living in love, suffering for

others, a real sacrifice in a history of love and death, in whom faith can securely rest, and of whom faith can sing its gratitude and praise. Faith in a Life, and so a life of faith—here is the perfect idea of the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Every other Scripture of faith will harmonize with this one, the distinct key-note, the sublime climax of them all. A Life in life, for all need and for all good—such is the privilege of faith, as Paul knows and describes the secret of his own most human life. “I have been crucified with Christ”—let us listen to his whole burning confession. “I have been crucified with Christ ; yet I live ; yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me ; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me.” It is all a supreme emphasis of life, life in its lowliest look, life in its largest energy, this human life in full experience ; and Christ the life of it ; and faith realizing this life within life, and singing its sweet refrain.

I call it the Scripture of Scriptures concerning faith. It is indeed the standard for interpreting the faith of the Gospel. As we know it, it will save us from mistakes about faith. The very spirit and tone of it should rebuke one of our ignorant misuses of faith. We sometimes hear persons talking about a “blind faith.” “Oh, I do n’t profess to understand it at all ; I just believe.” “I can’t explain the matter ; I take it simply on trust.” Or sometimes faltering lips sadly confess, “It is all dark to me—not a ray of light. I can only try to hold on to my faith.” Not one of these notes is a scriptural note. One may talk complacently about just believing, and another may speak in despair about it all being dark ; but neither tone is

ever heard in the confessions of faith in the Bible. The word of God knows nothing about a blind faith. It never inculcates an ignorant faith. The record of faith is a record of faith positive and hopeful. The voice of faith, in Old Testament and New, never speaks faintly or despairingly, "I simply believe." That vanishing tone could never express the faith of prophets and martyrs. The healthy, normal faith of the Gospel—"The life which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith"—has the light of truth in it, has the ring of energy in it, has the pulse of duty in it. It could never be a faith for life, broad and full as life, if it were blind, or ignorant, or hopeless. "The righteous shall live by faith," teaches the prophet of God. "I live in faith," confesses the child of God. And if we could have heard them both speak with their mouths, the very word faith would have thrilled us with its throbs of life.

We should be very careful that we do not misunderstand the Word of God in its teaching on the relation of faith to intelligence and knowledge. It is either a fancy or a paradox when one speaks out, "I believe because it is incredible." Or, we reach the climax of ignorance and absurdity when we teach that we are called upon to believe things contrary to reason. Such a process would be self-stultification from beginning to end, and would yield a harvest of superstitions. Nor is it much better to talk of believing things that are altogether above reason. Perhaps we really mean that certain truths seem to be against or out of the grasp of your or my reasoning. But we must not identify our misjudgments with what is properly called reason. Reason is independent of the fallibleness of any one mind, while it is evermore a standard to which

we appeal, with which our minds feel a kinship, which makes itself felt more and more as our minds grow in knowledge and thought, and we see life steadily and see it whole. The Word of God never opposes faith to knowledge, but faith to sight. It brings faith and knowledge together in vital relations. It speaks about abounding in faith and knowledge. It joins the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. Search the Scriptures, and you will see deep experiences of the spiritual life taught along with faith. Search the Scriptures, and you will find also deep experiences of the spiritual life taught along with knowledge. We may confess, in the noble language of the old creed, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord." We may confess our faith, in all the true humbleness of believing what these mortal eyes have never seen. But we may speak an experience equally real in the light of the Gospel truth: "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." The revelation of God anywhere, everywhere, in star, or flower, or setting sun, or the mind of man, or in the person of His only begotten Son, is not a revelation contrary to reason, nor a revelation above reason. It is a revelation for faith, but it is a revelation also of intelligence, for a growth of knowledge in faith, for a strength of faith in knowledge. Faith may receive it, and reason may know it, for its real truth for life and in life; while all the time there is more to believe, and more to know, as man comes more into fellowship with the living God in obedience to the Son of His love. If I

would have Paul's faith, if I would say with his energy of conviction, "I live in faith," then my faith, filling and moving my whole life, must be an intelligent faith, an inquiring faith, a studious faith, a growing faith, a faith for all thought and duty. If I believe like Paul, I must believe with every breath and every step, unceasingly as I think, and feel, and do.

We may all be thankful for our coming to see better that the faith of the Gospel, the "one faith," as the Scriptures call it, is a living and personal faith. One of the fine notes of the pulpit to-day is its emphasis of the person of Christ, Him as the object of trust. There is a distrust of man-made creeds, with their definitions and abstractions. Less and less do we hear such questions as, "Do you believe in total depravity?" or, "Do you believe in a limited atonement?" or, "Do you believe in the damnation of the heathen?" The right time has come when more and more it is felt that the all-important question is, "Do you believe in Christ?" We are swerving from the mere belief of wordy theories about the deep things of God. Men are right in being dissatisfied with a blank, notional faith, or a cold, propositional faith. While the old wine-skins of ecclesiastical confessions are bursting with the ferment of modern thought, while differences of interpreting human creeds grow wider and wider among those who have subscribed to the creeds, it is a cheering sign that all eyes turn to the person of Christ, and proclaim a simplicity of faith in Him for salvation and hope. It is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, more and more widely recognized, confessed, preached, that the faith of our salvation is not faith in a notion, not faith in a proposition, not

faith in a summary of man-made formulas, but faith in a person, and Him Jesus Christ the Son of God.

There is Christ in the Gospel, openly set forth crucified. We are called upon to look at Him in faith, to lean upon Him in faith. The truth of the Gospel is thus living and personal, and our obedience is living and personal. But now, on the other hand, we must beware of a danger. I think that it makes itself unmistakably felt in evangelistic work nowadays. We are getting away from a bare notional and propositional faith. We are emphasizing a living and personal faith. Now let us be careful that, in the way we preach and believe, we do not fall into a certain cant, and unconsciously make this living and personal faith a feeble sentiment. For instance, we hear exhortations such as "Come to Jesus," "Only trust Him," "Just believe." We hear these over and over amid anecdotes and songs, with never a word otherwise, until faith seems to be a very weak, narrow thing, and the person of Jesus a cloudy, unreal object. A live, serious man might cry out sometimes, "Who is He that I may believe in Him? Tell me more of Him. Why should I trust Him for my salvation? What is the salvation that I should believe on Him as my Saviour?"

When we turn to the Gospel of salvation, it makes all this plain. It does not proclaim a blind faith, nor a canting faith. It proclaims, indeed, a living and personal faith; but it makes this faith clear, plain, luminous. It shows you and me what it is to believe, and how we should believe, and why we should believe. It teaches what a large thing faith is, as large and deep and full as human life. It teaches who the Saviour is, and how we may know Him. It reveals Him, describes Him,

identifies Him with all the truth of God and all the need of man. Faith in a Person is the faith of the Gospel; but the Person!—see Him, mark Him, know Him in life and in death, in word, in deed, in character!

Consider two Scriptures, in which we are taught how free the faith is either of superstition or of sentimentalism. As Jesus passes by, He sees a man blind from his birth. He calls the poor man, and restores his eyes. As the neighbors wonderingly behold him, and ply their question, "How then were thine eyes opened?" all that he can answer at first is, "The man that is called Jesus—the man that is called Jesus—whether he be a sinner, I know not." Jesus finds him cast out of the synagogue, and asks him the living, personal question, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" How large and deep the question is! Something more than "the man called Jesus;" something other than the ignorance, "whether he be a sinner, I know not." "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" What answer could the poor, ignorant man make but "And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?" Honest, guileless, ready to believe—but first honestly and inquiringly, "Who is he, for my faith?" And the answer of the Son of God, how personal, and how distinctive, instructive, descriptive, "Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh with thee"! Then could the intelligent, grateful confession drop from the lips, "Lord, I believe." The Person was real, and described for faith; and the faith was real and intelligent in the Person.

Or, turn to an Apostolic scene. An ignorant, barbarous jailer, in a torment of conscience, prostrate, cries aloud, "What must I do to be saved?" The answer

of the Gospel is immediate, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house." The answer is simple: it calls for a living and personal faith. But read on. There is something more. It is not abstractly, "Just believe," nor a cant of repetition, "Trust in Jesus," "trust in Jesus." The jailer might well then have asked with the man of John's testimony, "Who is he, that I may believe on Him?" The preacher of the Gospel, in that midnight hour, promptly went on to reveal and make known the Lord Jesus Christ, Him whom they preached as the object of a living and personal faith. "And they spoke the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house."

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"—such is faith living and personal; but, living and personal, it is a faith whose light and life are revealed, taught, measured in the Word of God, in which Word also the Spirit of truth reveals and describes Him in whom the faith livingly and personally centers. It is a faith both that intelligent and vital even in the heart's first believing. To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ livingly and personally, is to believe from what the Word of the Lord has to speak concerning Him, and concerning Him in His vital relation to those who are exhorted to believe. For, according to the faith of the Gospel, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, we are to believe—

1. *Who He is.* The Gospel does, indeed, put a mighty emphasis on the person of Christ—and right here first, the very center of His person, who He is. "Who do men say that I am?" It is Jesus's own question, addressed to His disciples at a crisis in His ministry. Who is He? This man who goes about,

doing good, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead, preaching the Gospel to the poor—who is He? It is not a small question. It is a supreme question. So Jesus will test both the intelligence and devotion of His disciples. “Who say ye that I am?” The answer is directly and glowingly personal—“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Nay, even when Jesus blesses men and women—once when He turned the light of His power on the grave, declaring, “I am the resurrection and the life,” and appealed to the broken heart weeping beside him, “Believest thou this?” again the answer came back vividly personal, “Yea, Lord: I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even He that cometh into the world.” Again, when disciples were deserting the Lord, and when He tested the fidelity of the twelve, “Would ye also go away?” not only does Peter speak aloud the heart’s deep need, “Lord, to whom shall we go?” and the heart’s strong grasp of the blessing for its need, “Thou hast the words of eternal life,” but also the heart’s clear, unclouded faith concerning Him who so richly blesses, “And we have believed, and know that thou art the Holy One of God.”

“Believe on Jesus,” “trust Jesus.” “Who is He, that I may believe on Him?” If I have the faith of the Gospel, I shall believe, first of all, that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. I shall believe it with all my mind and heart in an intelligent, satisfied and grateful faith. Not in vain did the Apostles thus preach and teach concerning Jesus. They preached Him vitally and personally; and they preached the central truth of His person for faith; and this truth of His person was the Messiah, the Christ, the fulfiller of prophecies

and the Son of the living God. All through the Book of the Acts, the book of conversions, the truth is heard over and over that Jesus of Nazareth is Teacher, Saviour, Lord—so is He the Messiah, or Christ; and this Christ is the Son of the living God. Peter in Jerusalem, Paul in Corinth, John in Ephesus—these representatively, as we study the Word, these chief Apostles, throughout the Apostolic age, are heard exalting and magnifying the person of Jesus. “God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified,” preaches the first. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God”—“Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” teaches the last. It was the faith of life and heart, in an adoring look of light and love, such a faith that looked up to its living object, and spoke aloud—Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!

2. *What He has done for us.* We are to believe not only who He is, but what He has done for us—not only the truth of His person, but the facts of His work. We have seen the central truth of His person. What now are the central facts of His work? They are declared explicitly. “I make known unto you, brethren, the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved; I make known, I say, in what words I preached it unto you, if ye hold it fast except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures.” The Gospel, by which we are saved,

teaches Paul; the Gospel, which we are to hold fast, in a true, living faith—it is a Gospel of facts, of facts to be believed in a firm grasp of faith and a strong security of salvation. What are the facts for faith? The death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ—so Paul explicitly particularizes them. Whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, believes that He died for our sins, and that He hath been raised from the dead. The Gospel over and over proclaims these facts, for the faith that it requires, for the salvation that it offers. It does not proclaim these facts occasionally nor incidentally. They are vital facts in the integrity of the Gospel. They are proclaimed organically with the Gospel. They are indissolubly joined with the person of Christ. Christ and Him crucified—so the Corinthians heard Paul preach Christ. Jesus and the resurrection—so the Athenians heard Paul preach Jesus. It is simply agnostic indifference that would know Jesus without knowing His death and resurrection, as these shine out on nearly every page of the New Testament. Or it may be a sentimental mysticism which sings and talks about Jesus, and leaves out of account an intelligent, fully persuaded belief of the solid rockbed of history and testimony concerning Him as crucified, dead, buried, risen, ascended.

The person and the work of Jesus Christ, who He is and what He has done—these two, indissolubly, are proclaimed in the eternal Gospel. The truth of His person and the facts of His work make the Gospel in the divineness of its power. It is this Gospel that is declared to be the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. On the one side, or rather first, Christ is preached, who He is, what He has done; and

in this Gospel livingly preached, containing and conveying the power of God, a living faith is evoked. Paul describes it all in a vivid Scripture of truth and logic. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"—it is the very spirit of the Gospel of grace and glory; no respect of persons; mercy for all; man the sinner in penitence and tears, feeling the burden of his sins, and crying aloud for salvation. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" adds the Apostle with the living logic of the Spirit of truth. Faith before prayer, faith with prayer, He teaches, as one prays for salvation. "And how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard?" Link by link the truth shines forth. No groping in the dark, no guesses of fancies about a Saviour and salvation; but a Saviour who is heard in a real testimony of facts. "And how shall they hear without a preacher?" Still the chain grows, with its living truth both of person and message. "And how shall they preach except they be sent?"—there is the echo of the voice of the crucified and risen Lord, as His feet stand on the mount of ascension, and His mouth speaks the world-wide mission of the Gospel. Truth and fact, logic and life, faith and salvation—here they are clear, sure, intelligent, the power of God in it all; and that power is felt, real and strong, in the last note of the Apostle's simple doctrine: "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Preaching, hearing, believing, praying, salvation; the Gospel preached, which is the power of God, the sword of the Spirit, and man hearing it and so believing it, his faith breathing in prayer, and so realizing his salvation—such was the Apostolic Gospel, and such the Apostolic salvation.

The harmonies of this scriptural truth are heard unmistakably in a hundred Scriptures. Listen! "Many of them that heard the word believed;" "By my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel, and believe;" "Many of the Corinthians hearing believed;" "Having heard the word of the truth, the Gospel of your salvation,"—so are taught the responsibility of the sinner to hear, the necessity of his hearing, the critical issues of his hearing, whether he will believe or disbelieve. His faith begins in that simple act, receiving the testimony of the Gospel concerning a Saviour crucified and risen. You can hear. You know that you can hear. Each one of you feels his responsibility to hear, though he should deny it with his next breath. There the Spirit of truth first strives with you in the word of the Gospel. It is the first step in your conviction. You need to hear the Gospel as the power of God in your salvation. Whatever your difficulties of mind, or heart, honest doubts, or pride, or a feeling of self-sufficiency, or a feeling of loneliness and shame in this pitiless world, you want to hear the Word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation. It may be that you are skeptical concerning the Saviour; it may be that you do not feel your need of salvation; it is barely possible that some one of you, debased and degraded by his sins, is wondering whether there is any salvation for him. You all need to hear, to listen to the Word of Christ, that you may believe. There is truth enough and power enough in this Gospel, the Spirit of truth in it, the power of God in it, to convince and convict you every one that Jesus is Saviour and Lord, and that you need salvation from your sins.

Many of us to-night can recall the story that Moses E. Lard used to tell so eloquently, in his inimitable way, about the skeptical lawyer in a Missouri town. He had doubts as to the Christ of the Gospel history. His mind stumbled at the two most critical points—Christ's character and Christ's authority; these two together, so inextricably woven in the Gospel narrative; a perfect character claimed for Christ, and absolute authority claimed by Christ. The lawyer frankly expressed his skepticism during a great protracted meeting. The man of God straightforwardly questioned the skeptic: had he investigated the claims of Jesus? had he studied, compared, pondered the Gospel record from beginning to end, every page, every line, fully and fairly? No, he had not—not that protractedly and thoroughly. "Will you do it?" asked the big-bodied, big-brained, big-hearted preacher, holding out his New Testament, as the Spirit of God opened the door of a rich opportunity to a fellow-man's heart. The lawyer took the book, read Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, day after day, steadily, absorbingly. The protracted meeting was still going on, and believers were nightly turning to the Lord. One night the lawyer took his seat near the pulpit, his face glowing with light. He could scarcely wait for the last word of the sermon. He would not wait for any rallying song. When the old, familiar invitation was extended, and before the echo of the preacher's strangely tender voice had ceased, the manly attorney arose, with his hand on his heart, and spoke aloud in the breathless silence of the vast crowd: "My brother, I believe with all my heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and I want to confess Him as my Saviour

and Lord." Oh! how that conversion in the nineteenth century shines in the light of the old Apostolic word—"These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name"!

If, therefore, you have the vital faith of the Gospel, you will believe in your heart who Christ is, and what He has done for you—what He has done for you, and who He is to you. His life, His death, His resurrection, His character, His teaching, His work, His authority, His promises—these you will hold together in a living unity of intelligence and faith and obedience. The more you study Him, the more you will be convinced that He can not be estimated piecemeal. The more you study your own heart, the more you will feel that Bethlehem and Calvary and Pentecost speak to your deepest need with the truth of salvation. Do we hear the familiar note about feeling our need of salvation, in a true conviction of sin? The way to feel that need is to behold the Saviour—to look at Him, read Him, hear Him, learn of Him. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," is the prophet's voice. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself," is the world-wide vision of the Cross of Christ. "Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified," is the Apostolic Gospel. Christ and Him crucified—Christ, not only Christ crucified; Christ crucified, not only Christ—both together—how He lived, who He was, what He taught, what He did, how He suffered and died, how He arose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and sent the Spirit of truth to convince the world of sin,—this is the Gospel to be preached to the whole creation.

As we hear it, our responsibility becomes clear—do we believe it, or disbelieve it? This will be our sin, of which the Holy Spirit will convict us, that we believe not on the Son of God for salvation. Because He was pure and sinless, Himself Man; because He was tempted, and fell not; because He bore our sicknesses and infirmities; because He taught us fully of God and duty and immortality; because He obeyed His Father's will, and fulfilled all righteousness: because He became obedient even unto death—yea, the death of the Cross; because He conquered death, and ever liveth to make intercession for us—because of this rich, round, true, living Gospel we are responsible before God for believing or disbelieving it. If such a Gospel does not convict you of sin, if such a Gospel does not make you feel your need of salvation in showing you such a Saviour who takes away your sin, and brings you a new life, it must be that you indifferently or rebelliously disbelieve it, to your condemnation.

Who Christ was, and what He has done for men, is just this living a truth and power for their salvation. His words, His deeds, His death, His resurrection, are the shining rays of the central sun of His person. We believe what He taught and did, no cunningly devised fable; we believe that He died for our sins, and was raised for our justification; we believe in our hearts that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God; and—now listen—believing all this, we are prepared to believe *on* Him, and *in* Him. “Ye believe in God, believe also in me,” teaches Jesus. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” exhorts the Apostle. The true faith is just that living and personal. It is verily trust in a person. The rays of His words and deeds and precepts lead up

to Him, in all the glory of His character and the majesty of His authority, as He really lives to-day and forever. To believe savingly is to believe not only who He is, not only what He has done, but to believe on Him and in Him in view of who He is and what He has said and done. To believe savingly is to trust HIM—in our hearts, as He teaches and draws us, to entrust ourselves to Him as Teacher, Saviour, and Lord. Does it seem very simple, after all? So it is. It is just like your child's believing you and believing in you. He trusts you, a father, a mother, for what you promise him, and for everything that you are to him and everything that you have done for him. It is like my trusting in my friend, whose words I believe, whose favors I could not doubt, and who, in the realness of his character, wins my heart for a daily trust in him. The living faith of the Gospel believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; it believes that He died for our sins, and that God raised Him from the dead; it believes in Him, and on Him—it trusts Him, it entrusts itself to Him according to His word, fully assured that what He promises He is able to perform.

A living faith in a living Lord—this the faith of the Gospel—there is one scriptural word that expresses and proves how real and living such faith is. I wish that I could speak it without making a single stir of controversy. I should like so much to bring it in for our light and help apart from all jarring and warring opinions. The Scriptures mention it so naturally. They make it express and prove the inmost heart of faith. They teach it as a vital experience of a real faith. This luminous word is *obedience*. How sublimely it figures in the Gospel! It is a mighty word in the vision of

the world-wide mission of the Gospel. The mystery of redemption, "made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith;" grace and apostleship, "unto obedience of faith among all the nations"; Christ's work, "for the obedience of the Gentiles,"—so the great Apostle of world-wide missions beholds and describes the living faith. "A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith," is a striking note of the fruit of the personal faith. "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed"—"Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect,"—let two Scriptures summarize them all: they teach faith as expressing and proving and perfecting itself in obedience. The Gospel faith issues in obedience, as the hidden waters of a fountain spring forth in a flowing stream. The Gospel faith is proved in obedience, as the loyalty of a soldier declares itself in promptly heeding the word of command. The Gospel faith perfects itself in obedience, as the seed of the plant works through stalk and leaf, on to the bright consummate flower.

It is this living faith, alive in the heart, alive in word, alive in deed, which, according to the Gospel, receives salvation. Can we hear the doctrine without straightway facing each other for a theological combat? What saith the Scripture? Not simply one Scripture, but any Scripture, all the Scriptures that speak specifically of salvation, and represent man as receiving or realizing his salvation. "Every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins." So says the Word of God. "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name." It is the same Word. "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Still the Word of truth speaks. "Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism." Shall we not also hear this teaching of the Holy Spirit? Or, how do we read salvation in the Apostolic ministry of the Gospel? "What must I do to be saved?" cries out an anxious inquirer. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved," is the ringing answer. "Brethren, what shall we do?" was the no less anxious cry of a vast crowd of inquirers. Again the answer comes clear to mind and heart: "Repent ye, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." "And now why tarriest thou?" so speaks an humble disciple to another inquirer found on his knees in prayer; "and now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." Faith, in one Scripture, prominent; in another, repentance and baptism prominent; in still another, baptism alone prominent. Faith and salvation, repentance and salvation, confession and salvation, baptism and salvation—so they are taught in the Word of God; so they were preached by Peter and Paul to inquirers; and so concerning those of Jerusalem, and those of Philippi, and those of Ephesus, could the history be written as it was concerning those of Corinth—"Many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized."

Does it not look like a live faith? It is vitally felt with repentance. It is vitally heard in confession. It is vitally seen in baptism. Does it not look like the obedience streaming forth from the heart of faith, the obedience proving the health and vigor of faith, the obedience blooming like a flower in the life of faith?

It is all so live and real. There is no disappointment of salvation. There is never an agonizing, uncertain delay as to salvation. It is light and life, and salvation. It is faith and obedience, and salvation. The light of salvation shines, and faith lives in obedience, and the obedient believer rejoices greatly. Here is the fact, without controversy: the Word of God shows the true faith of the Gospel as never hiding itself, never halting, under the light of the Spirit of truth, but promptly and gladly becoming an obedient faith. See the live faith of Saul of Tarsus, as he repents of his bloodthirsty deeds, and prays, and waits the will of the Lord. See the live faith of the penitent jailer in his tenderly washing the wounds of Paul and Silas. See the live faith of Ephesian sorcerers, who, believing, came, confessing, and declaring their evil practices. See the live faith of a pagan visitor to the house of God, as he is convicted of sin, and then and there falls down on his face and worships the true God, declaring that God is in that gathering indeed.

I do want to know if we can not hear these oracles of God concerning the living faith, without any need of controversy. There will never be controversy, if we accept this simple teaching as to how the faith of the Gospel comes, and what it believes, and what it does. It comes by hearing the Word of God. It believes who Christ is, and trusts Him for salvation, and speedily obeys Him. If faith is that real and living, whence can doubt or debate arise? Why, just here has been the war of opinion. On the one hand, it has been taught that this simple faith, born in hearing the Gospel, penitent and heartfelt though the faith be, is not the kind of faith which receives salvation. Accord-

ing to this teaching, there must be a faith wrought in the heart wholly apart from the Word of truth, in answer to prayer alone, prolonged and painful, if need be. On the other hand, in a wide extreme, it has been taught that this very penitent and heartfelt faith, rightly indeed produced in hearing the Gospel of salvation, still has no promise nor realization of salvation at all before confession and baptism. Both doctrines are wrong, according to God's Word. The first is cloudy mysticism; the second is abstract rationalism. According to the Scriptures, as we have seen, the faith of salvation comes by hearing the Gospel, which is declared to be the power of God unto salvation; and according to the Scriptures, a heartfelt faith has already in itself the beginnings of salvation. The mystic is wrong when he undervalues the faith that the Spirit of truth effects in the heart as one hears the Gospel of grace. The rationalist is wrong as he argues all sense of any salvation out of a penitent, heartfelt faith, and argues salvation of faith only and really in possession when faith expresses itself in baptism.

No; this is all a wrong reading of the Word of God. The Scriptures teach faith and salvation, repentance and salvation, confession and salvation, baptism and salvation. It is sheer mysticism, when the Scripture says, "Many of the Corinthians hearing believed," straightway to deny that their faith was a saving faith. It is bald rationalism, when the Scripture pictures a penitent believer, "Behold, he prayeth," straightout to deny that he has experienced yet any salvation in reality. It is mere mysticism that forbids one who has heard the Gospel, and believes it in his heart, to presume yet to confess his faith in the Lord

Jesus. It is cold rationalism that sees another penitent believer tenderly washing the stripes of God's servants, and yet professes to see therein no proof of a living faith realizing salvation until later the believer is baptized. No; if you have a clear conviction of sin, a heartfelt persuasion of Christ as a Saviour, a willingness to do God's will, all this inward renovation, the work of the Spirit of truth in His strivings with men, means your salvation begun in you as a present reality. Such a spiritual renewal of the springs of your being, such a spiritual transformation of the courses of your life, are possible only as a real redemption wrought for all men, and making itself felt in you, according as you receive it. Thought by thought, feeling by feeling, will by will, as the influence of the Word of the truth of the Gospel works duly in you, O my fellow-man! it is the Gospel of your salvation—a spiritual reality in every touch of every experience.

Ah! brethren, when we center on fierce controversies as to how faith comes, or whether there is any remission of one's sins at all until one is baptized, no wonder we lose complete sight of the rich Scriptures that reveal the very heart of human redemption. Would we know, indeed, the origin, the beginning, of salvation? Behold God! "God so loved the world"—that is God's attitude toward a sinning world; a heart of love in the gift of His only begotten Son. Nay, before John the Baptist pointed to Jesus, saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," the Scriptures sublimely speak of "the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world." So true is it that there has never been an hour since Adam and Eve,

“Hand in hand, with wandering step and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.”

but there has been the presence of redemption, whether in twilight tints of mornings heavily clouded, or in the noontide glory of the days of the Son of man. Do we dispute over the time of one's salvation? The lofty Scripture teaches God's "own purpose and grace" as "given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, but now manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus." Do we debate both how and when God forgives sinners? Again, the Word represents "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses." God loving sinners, giving the Son of His love to die for them, forgiving them in the sacrifice of His Son, calling and bidding them to realize this salvation in the obedience of faith, and threatening their condemnation if they disbelieve it—this is the clear, simple Gospel of His grace. And this Gospel affirms and assures salvation to man with his every real, sincere experience of the Gospel in truth and power, and accordingly exhorts him to make the salvation more and more his own in the obedience of a living faith. "The word is nigh thee," so real and near is this salvation, so easy to receive; "in thy mouth, and in thy heart," so real and personal as a saving experience: "because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Certainly, in the believing heart is the presence of the righteousness of God, a real righteousness experienced in a vital faith. Certainly, with the confessing mouth is the presence

of salvation, a real salvation, becoming more real and assured in the good confession. The mysticism is blind which denies the clearness of salvation in such faith. The rationalism is mechanical which argues away still any realness of salvation in such confession. The salvation of God is there in the vital faith, as it flows forth in living words. Nay, more, according to the Gospel of your and my salvation, this living faith, as we read the stories of conversions in the Apostolic ministry, becomes more obedient still in holy baptism. The penitent believer is duly and gladly baptized. In the light of the Gospel, he eagerly cries, "Behold, water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" For, in the light of the Gospel, baptism neither a fetich nor a whim, in baptism his salvation is beautifully represented, in baptism his salvation is helpfully confirmed, in baptism his salvation is blessedly associated with the salvation of others, in baptism his salvation is potentially consummated in the hope of eternal life. In short, it is a living faith all the time, alive and throbbing in obedience, and salvation a real blessing with every throb of the heart and every word and deed of the life. "The Lord added together day by day those that were being saved"—such is the vital fact concerning those first converts in Jerusalem, who heard the Gospel, believed it in their hearts, repented of their sins, confessed the name of Jesus, were baptized, and went on loving one another and praising God. The process of one's salvation is real and sweet with the process of one's obedience, as the obedience flows from a living faith in the living Son of God.

"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" Search yourselves, and see if you are living in this living faith.

It is the faith of faiths, and fills human life. "He that disbelieveth shall be condemned." You must face this responsibility. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Faith and life, disobedience and the wrath of God—here they are set before you: choose you to-night which you will do—live by faith in Jesus Christ, or judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" Do you believe on Him as your Saviour, your Teacher, your Lord? In your heart right now, as the Spirit of truth teaches and draws you, is there a real, living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Then, according to the old, simple, clear Apostolic Gospel, express your faith, prove your faith, perfect your faith. Do not hesitate. Do not delay. Do not be misled. If in your heart you believe the Word of the truth, the Gospel of your salvation, it is a saving faith; the precious blood of the Lamb of God is there, redeeming and sanctifying you. Promptly, gladly, in the power and precept of the Gospel, let your faith express itself, prove itself, perfect itself in obedience. In the faith of your heart, confess the name of Christ. Oh! according to those plain Apostolic examples, in the faith of your heart confess the name of Christ: according to those plain Apostolic examples, in the faith of your heart be baptized into the name of Christ. Let the living and saving faith of your heart save you to-day and forever in a life of obedience.

It is all so real. It is a real faith. It is a real salvation. It is a real life. It is salvation from sin and death, and salvation for a life in union and commu-

nion with the life of the Son of God. We not only believe who He is, and what He has done, but in our faith we live in Him, and He lives in us. We not only believe on Him and in Him, but in our faith He becomes our life, the light and life of all our living. Whatever our life, as we live in loving obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, we find Him present in it all. "Christ liveth in me"—there is the secret of life in the power of faith. "Christ liveth in me"—so can we overcome sin, and grow pure in heart and character. "Christ liveth in me"—so must we meet trial, and become wise and strong. "Christ liveth in me"—so are we to live every day in lowly rounds and humble tasks. "Christ liveth in me"—here is the life of prayer and doing good. "Christ liveth in me"—it is the light for all objects of all thought, the light in which we shall see God, and read man, and mark the travail and course of all the world. A personal faith, a living faith, felt in all our mind and life, Christ become so real to us as we love and obey Him, it may confess day by day in strong joy and hope, "I know him whom I have believed"—"We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is"—"When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall we also with him be manifested in glory."

SERMON V.

THE GOOD CONFESSION.



V.

THE GOOD CONFESSION.

"And didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses."—*I. Tim. vi. 12.*

Could there be a finer thrill of memory! Paul appeals to the past while exhorting Timothy in the pursuit of eternal life. He bids Timothy to look back, and recall a scene and rehear a voice. There in Lystra, a city lying on a dreary plain at the foot of a volcanic mountain, the population generally idolators, there in the very first days of Paul's and Barnabas's preaching, a Jewish boy was modestly standing in the sight of many witnesses, a grandmother's kindly eye resting upon him, and a mother's heart throbbing with joy. He is but a little way in his teens; yet, in the hushed assembly, bravely and beautifully he speaks aloud the faith of his youthful heart—"I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God."

It was the good confession, as Paul definitely and preëminently calls it. Not a *good profession*, as it appears in the old version, but as it is accurately translated in the Revised Version, *the good confession*. Paul stirringly appeals to that, as he incites Timothy in the spiritual conflict. For Timothy there was, in the thought of it, all the tenderness of a sweet human memory—his boyhood days, the devoted care of him by his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, his learn-

ing of God and the Messiah to come, the familiar walks and faces of his native town, and that memorable day when, in the presence of parents, neighbors, friends, he declared his heartfelt allegiance to the Son of God. He was a man now, a minister of the Gospel, with an experience of twenty years' service under Paul, and just then charged with a laborious mission in the idolatrous city of Ephesus. But in that far-off time, in that far-away scene, as Paul knew, and as Paul urged, the grown man, as he recalled it all, would find an ever-fresh and powerful motive for manhood's duty and hope. "Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses."

"The good confession." It is something definite. It is something distinct. It is concerning a Person. But while definite and distinct, and concerning a Person, it is, as set forth so frequently in the Scriptures, a rich and varied confession, not in any one form of words. Here is the fine interest of our study this evening. We want to see the meaning of this confession, its broad and deep meaning, and how good it is. It must be singularly good that, while so definitely and distinctly concerning a Person, and making a powerful motive for one's whole spiritual life, at once a memorial and an ideal, it is not expressed rigidly in a theological formula, but flows out in richness and variedness of utterance, always more in meaning than the mouth can speak, always clear and simple in what is spoken, even by childlike lips. There is all this interest about the good confession, as it is taught in the Word of God, now the voice of an individual heart, or again

the flower of a timely development of Apostolic doctrine. Let us study it thus together, a personal speech, warm from the heart of a believer, or a progress of doctrine in some new outgrowth of revelation.

1. Jesus is walking among men. It is at the outset of His earthly mission. And already men are confessing Him. Mark how definite and distinct the confession! Andrew, abiding with Jesus and hearing His teaching, goes forth at nightfall to find his own brother, and goes confessing, "We have found the Messiah." Philip, called by Jesus, hastens to find Nathanael; and again there is a confession, definite, but varied in the heart's joy—"We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael, guileless, devout, inquiring, at last convinced by what he saw and heard, speaks the faith of his heart—"Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel." So the record of confessions runs. There is no hard and fast form of words, no mechanical repetitions, no unintelligent memorizings. Men are speaking out of the throbs of a new life that they find in themselves. Each man speaks, as the heart gives him utterance. The presence of Jesus, the words of Jesus, the deeds of Jesus, are stirring the depths of human experience, and blessing those that receive Him in faith and love; and every keen sense of the need of Him, and every fresh attraction to Him, and every new-found comfort in Him, brings forth a confession, definite and distinct, and rich and varied. Jesus once, as many of his disciples went back and walked no more with Him, turned to the Twelve, and touchingly asked, "Would ye also go away?" It was, of course,

the impulsive Peter that answered for all their hearts' devotion: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." And this passionate need and attachment finds its intelligent, pointed confession—"And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God." So distinct it is, and again beautifully varied in the fullness of the soul's faith. Even the depths of sorrow, illumined by the comfort of Jesus—here, too, the believer confesses with the mouth a good confession. For she has met the Lord, and heard His assuring word—"Thy brother shall rise again." She has heard His word, as it becomes a finer light in light—"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." And when the heart is challenged concerning its belief of this wonderful light radiating from the very presence of God, it does not stumble, it sees a truth, it feels a comfort, it sums up its faith in unhesitating confession: "Yea, Lord: I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even he that cometh into the world."

Do we not begin to see why it is worthily called the good confession? Men and women are seeing Jesus, hearing Him, following Him, receiving from Him blessing after blessing—light, comfort, hope—and their hearts must speak concerning Him. It is the intelligence of faith as well as the sincere gratitude of faith. They say what they think of Him. They speak out who they think He is. To some such pronouncement must every study of Jesus finally come. This One whose character is spotless, who imparts life in teaching truth, who consoles all sorrow, who goes

about doing good, who promises the resurrection of the dead—what are we to think of Him? whose Son is He? Let the answer be clear and definite. The mind craves it. The heart prompts it. We can not be satisfied with Carlyle's silence. We can but be dissatisfied with Rênan's rhetoric. Let us speak out. Let our words not evaporate in figures. Let them crystallize in confession. Those first believers—Andrew, and Philip, and Nathanael, and Peter, and Martha—confess Him; and the full and definite confession of the harp of faith, harmonizing its divers tones, is the strain, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

"The Christ"—here is the first stage of the good confession; here is its first, continual emphasis. Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. The word was no strange one to a Jew. It was to him a rich word of Jewish history—this term, Christ in Greek, Messiah in Hebrew, Anointed to us in English. An anointed one—a Christ—was a familiar person in Israel. Peter and Martha could look back, and see priests anointed, prophets anointed, kings anointed. It was the sign of God upon them for their office—consecrating them, giving them authority, protecting them. They were His anointed ones, as they spilt the blood of bulls and goats, or taught a message of truth and duty, or ruled the people in equity. But Philip and Nathanael now beheld Him who towered above all the anointed ones of other days. Here was the Priest of the priests, the Prophet of the prophets, the King of the kings—greater than Abel, and wiser than Moses, and more royal than David. They were the types: He was the antitype. They were the shadows; He was the substance. The service of these anointed priests, prophets,

kings, was now to be fulfilled in Him, the Anointed, the Messiah, the Christ. The true Israel could not mistake Him. His presence was fragrant with prophecy; His speech echoed many a word of Old Testament teaching; His look was that of a Jew. The true Israel, needy, hungry, sore, could but find Him, and straightway confess Him. He was just that real to Andrew and Philip. They might not comprehend Him fully; they might stumble at this or that word; but they understood what they did understand of Him. Fearing God and loving truth, with good and honest hearts, they could take in the testimony of the Christ's own concerning Himself: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." As they saw all this, and themselves were blest by Jesus, they could but remember the Word of the Lord; and putting the two together, they confessed, at once in clear thought and fervent gratitude, their definite, satisfied faith—"Thou art the Christ."

This is the origin of "the good confession," as it was succinctly and familiarly called a quarter of a century later among those early Christians. We see it here in the making, as it centers upon the person of Jesus, and means so much while it speaks so briefly—a word of truth to those first believers, and a word out of their hearts, and a definite word with their mouths. And this is the first stage of meaning—it confesses the Christ. It thinks and speaks of Jesus distinctively as the Messiah, the Anointed. It is the Jewish aspect

and emphasis of the good confession. While Jesus was upon earth, and when He had arisen from the dead and ascended into Heaven, both before and after, the Jewish believers think and speak of Him as the Christ. So Peter preached Him to Jews on the day of Pentecost; and so Paul proclaimed Him in Rome to the Jews that came to the Apostle's lodging. Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ—this was the Apostolic word for the temple, and for the synagogue, and for the place of prayer by the river side. So they in Jerusalem believed, and so the noble Bereans. Out of the Old Testament Scriptures was the argument made, and the testimony of Apostles enforced; and many a Jew that believed in God was persuaded to believe in Jesus as the Christ of God. It was a vital faith, an intelligent faith, spoken from the peace and joy of a Lydia's or a Crispus's heart—"I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God."

2. There is another stage in the growth of the good confession. Later on, in the spread of the Gospel, it takes on a specially vivid aspect; it develops a particularly stronger emphasis. I do not mean that this tone was not heard before. It was sounded necessarily in the harmony of the idea of the Christ. It had, too, a distinct note in Peter's very sermon on the day of Pentecost. Nor do I mean that this vivid aspect, this stronger emphasis, as it is progressively developed, darkens or silences all else of this good confession that went before. No; for the doctrine, the confession, fully and definitely, that Jesus is the Christ, is heard in the Scriptures from the last Apostolic voice. Yet there is indubitably in Paul's teaching a fresh, singular, impressive voice, a pointedly recurrent voice, on con-

fessing Jesus. Again we shall see how divinely rich is the idea of this good confession, whose fullness of meaning no one form of words can contain; and again we shall see how definite and emphatic it can become for practical understanding and benefit, in this doctrine peculiarly Paul's own.

The very first fact of the matter is striking. The word Christ, in Paul's use, undergoes a change. It is not always, with him, an official word. It does not always emit, under his dictation, its peculiar sense, *anointed*. He does not always mean to bring out that sense. Nay, very, very often he practically lets it go altogether. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, frequently transcends the Jewish meaning of the word *Christ*. Mark how again and again he uses it, not officially, but personally. "Christ" becomes on his lips, so significantly, a dear, warm word for the person of Christ. The larger, complete idea of Christ's person swallows up the special notions of His office, as these are seen and embodied by the Jewish mind. How fervently personal is this word with Paul. "Christ died for us"—"For to me to live is Christ"—"Christ in you, the hope of glory"—a hundred times over, indeed, does Paul speak in this deeply vital and personal way of Jesus of Nazareth, not saying, the Christ, but simply, Christ.

It means plainly enough that the "secret of Jesus," a fine phrase of this day, Paul had thoroughly mastered. Jesus as a personal character for love and imitation, Jesus as a power in the heart, Jesus as a motive in duty, Jesus as a life in men's lives—all that He taught, all that He did, all that He was in the way of spiritual light and influence, received and realized continuously

in human experience—this truth, which even a certain school of skepticism consents to, was a shining reality for Paul. And so real and living is Jesus for Paul, that the Apostle, speaking and writing the name Christ, drops off any purpose of emphasizing its Hebrew conception of office, and uses it of the risen and exalted Jesus, who dwells henceforth in the hearts of His disciples, the very fullness of God for human lives and duty.

But, mark you! Paul makes a definite confession of Jesus. Jesus is this fullness of life for him, in a beautiful spiritual reality that can not be reasonably gainsaid; but the Apostle does not lose himself in vague mysticism. Out of this fullness of life he, too, confesses the good confession. He speaks of Jesus definitely and distinctively. He brings out a fresh aspect, he makes a particular emphasis of the good confession. The emphasis is heard in his preaching. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord." The Lordship of Jesus—this is what Paul sets forth with an emphasis and variety peculiarly his own. The idea is wrapt up in the Hebrew conception of the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed. The Christ is, indeed, Prophet, Priest, and King. But Paul singles out this Kingship. He emphasizes it. He enforces it. It is, with him, a distinctively strong note of the good confession. Listen: "No man can say Jesus is Lord but in the Holy Spirit." What he thus preaches and teaches, the Lordship of Jesus, he enforces as a confession of the believer—"the word of faith, which we preach." What is this particular word? "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord"—a faith of the heart, of course, it must first be—"and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the

dead." But while "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," yet, really and definitely, as the Apostle immediately adds, "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The Lordship of Jesus Christ—in confession—what a favorite truth it is with Paul! Hear him once more in the sublime climax of his teaching. It is the noble Scripture concerning Christ's emptying Himself, and humbling Himself, and becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Then listen to this pæan of glory, with its distinct, mighty note of confession: "Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Is it not a very definite confession, looked at from whatever point of view? And yet is it not definite and richly varied together? Do you not think there is need of this emphatic note of the good confession? Is it not well that, in the progress of Christian doctrine, Paul should so illustriously set forth the Lordship of Jesus? Is it not a true note for heart and duty that the Apostle, in reminding Timothy of that memorable vow, should remind him too "of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession"—the dominant note there the Lordship of Jesus? I do not know a more healthful exhibit of Christian doctrine than this—that Paul should so vividly speak of the personal Christ, words afire with the reality of a life-union with Christ, figures piled upon figures to tell how dear is Christ in sweet intimateness of companionship,

and yet that, just as often and just as truly, he should exalt Jesus as Lord, and unreservedly speak his glad obedience to such a Lord. Have you not lived out in yourself the reality of this truth, and found that you deeply needed it? Is it not one of the first true experiences in our turning to God? Do we not feel like saying humbly, just as Saul of Tarsus, blind and prostrate, said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Do you not see more and more why the Lordship of Jesus Christ was such a distinct and constant note with Paul? Why, it is only a little exaggeration of rhetoric to say that, in nearly every speech and writing of Paul's, he expresses the Lordship of Jesus. It is intelligently and devoutly Lord, Lord, Lord, with him again and again. The truth is vital in Paul's doctrine; it is luminously real in Paul's life. The true expression of the life of freedom in Christ, realized as men obey the truth, and the truth a life in Christ Himself—this is the reason that Paul distinctly calls himself "a bond-servant of Jesus Christ," and expressly glories in the signs of his bondage—"I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus." Yes; it is a truth for to-day—the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Men never needed it more than they need it now. Now, when liberty is a birthright, an atmosphere, a privilege for all, we need to learn that it can be truly had and enjoyed only in obedience to truth, in obeying Jesus as Lord. It is only this that can save us from anarchies in society, and from the subtler bondage of an æsthetic selfishness. It goes signally to constitute the good confession that we can stand in the sight of many witnesses, and from the heart, definitely and gladly, after Paul, confess Jesus as Lord.

3. The meaning of the good confession still progresses in the Scriptures. It is now a different time, as well as another note. The first century of the Christian era is closing. The Gospel, to repeat Paul's splendid hyperbole, has been preached in all creation under heaven. There are churches of Christ everywhere—in Jerusalem, in Antioch, in Ephesus, in Corinth, in Rome: in provinces and in cities the faith of the Gospel has been established. The martyrs have become a noble army—these witnesses for Christ that have not counted their lives dear; who before the block and in the arena and under torture have steadfastly confessed, "I am a Christian;" who have died, glorifying God in this name. Paul has been beheaded. Peter has been crucified. John alone of the Apostles remains. And it is John that teaches a new meaning of the good confession. We may say that Peter emphasizes the Messiahship of Jesus, this office in fulfillment of Hebrew prophecy, an argument addressed to Jews. We may say that Paul sets forth specially the Lordship of Jesus, this authority against the idol gods of the heathen, an appeal to the consciences of the Gentiles. But it was reserved for John to enforce another idea in the confession of Jesus; and again we shall see how definite, how varied, how vital the good confession is.

We rightly call it a progress of meaning of the good confession. It has been wrapt up in Apostolic doctrine all along; but it is brought out, signalized, emphasized in a crisis of the Church's life. The fact results according to Bishop Butler's pregnant suggestion—"It might possibly be intended that events, as they come to pass, should open and ascertain the meaning of several parts of Scripture." In a word, John's teach-

ing confronts a heresy. A spirit of antichrist was abroad. A subtle theory was spreading, that the person of Jesus Christ was not a real embodiment on earth. The heresy is called Docetism. It held that the body of the Saviour was only a phantom body. Holding matter to be necessarily corrupt, it taught that the Saviour lived and suffered and died only in appearance. John corners the false doctrine as he characterizes its advocates—"For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist."

For a true reason there is, in the doctrine of the last Apostle, an enforcement, an emphasis, of the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was a real appearance of history. It is a fact to be taught and confessed, against all tendencies to make Christ a mere influence and sentiment in life. The Docetics denied that He really lived in the flesh. They thought that His spirit was too pure to come actually into contact with a mortal body. But, practically, the oldtime heresy still survives whenever we hear men slighting the Christ of the Gospel, and talking sentimentally about the ideal Jesus. All this sentimental admiration of Jesus, this conception of Him in fanciful lights, this dreamy inhalation of certain flowers of His doctrine—do you not notice how it all etherealizes the New Testament history, and makes the person of Jesus indefinite and unreal? Do you not see how it emasculates the vitality and the vigor of any satisfactory confession of Jesus? Nay, is there not danger, too, that the very orthodox faith in the Divinity of Christ may become half-blind to His real Humanity, and lose the good of that equal fact?

Does not often our argument that Jesus is Divine, and that He has been raised from the dead, and that His authority is expressed in the Apostolic Gospel, strangely sound abstract and cold, without the closeness and warmth of the real human life of the Son of Mary?

John's teaching strikes against all these tendencies. As the Docetics think to exalt the spiritual character of Jesus by denying that He actually lived in a body; or as certain modern sentimentalists idealize the Christ of history until there is left only a hazy image of His person; or as the orthodox dogmatist preaches His Divinity and authority without any human flavors and sympathies,—the last Apostle teaches emphatically that Jesus was seen, heard, handled, and that this very life manifested bodily was the eternal life that dwelt with the Father.

Mark how definite and beautiful is this two-sided emphasis of the good confession, according to John's teaching. Does it not leave the Humanity of Christ an abiding reality for men? That life there in Judea and Galilee, nineteen hundred years ago, was all so real. He was a baby in His mother's arms. He was a boy in the Temple, about His Father's business. He became hungry by the long fast in the wilderness. He sat by Jacob's well, tired and thirsty. He lay asleep in the end of the ship while the storm was raging. He gladdened the wedding feast with His presence. He was an agreeable guest at the table of the publican. He enjoyed the home of Martha and Mary. He gathered little children in His arms, and prayed over them a blessing. He was touched with compassion as He saw the multitude hungry and faint. He wept over Jerusalem. He wept at the tomb of Lazarus. He sweat,

as it were, great drops of blood in the agony of Gethsemane. There could be no doubt that He was human. Hear him delight to call Himself the Son of Man. His humanity was real and perfect. Hear Him again and again speak of His example for men. He was a genuine man, growing up and learning obedience to God as His Father. Hear him over and over protesting His sinless character and His flawless obedience. He was truly human—conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate. And all this real humanness is a live sympathy of Heaven to-day with every struggling son and daughter of humanity. The High-Priest of our confession He is, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, able to succor the tempted because He once suffered in trial.

All this real, warm, abiding Humanity, John puts it definitely and emphatically in the good confession. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." It was no phantom. It was no legendary person. It was no sentimental picture. It was no abstract official. John makes a double emphasis of the good confession. Jesus Christ is come in the flesh—and Jesus Christ is the Son of God. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God." "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also." It was a reality of Divinity. The length and breadth and depth and height of the truth can not be fully measured by language, not even by an inspired Word. The words for it, from Apostolic lips, are not rigid, though definite; are not exhaustive, though luminous. The Apostolic teaching

of it is of history to experience. It was the life that was manifested, the eternal life which was with the Father. That life was real in history—Jesus Christ is come in the flesh; so the believer confesses. But that life was not only of yesterday—Jesus Christ is the Son of God; in that Sonship is the eternal life; so the believer, confessing the Son, hath the Father also. It is a testimony of history that the disciple believes; and it is a reality of experience that he confesses.

“I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God”—this is the good confession. It was confessed by men as they came, in penitence and faith, to the waters of baptism. “Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” exclaimed the Æthiopian eunuch. “And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” The passage, question and answer, interpolated though it be, yet interpolated early by copyists, proves what was really the custom of the early Church. The word of faith preached, reaching the heart, became a confession of the mouth—distinct, definite, significant—the good confession, preëminently. It was what we need to preach and to hear again in this age. See how good it may be for you! See what a memory it may become to you! See what a light it is for you, shining more and more unto the perfect day!

Is not its very simplicity a great good for you? Salvation is preached to you; and it is not a salvation of knotty points that you must unravel before you can be saved. God does not require you to accept a man-made creed to join His Church. This is all—this Divine creed. Believe in Jesus Christ as your Saviour, your

Teacher, your Lord. Pledge yourself to trust Him for forgiveness of your sins, and to learn of Him your daily duty, and steadfastly to obey Him. This is all. This is enough. You do not have to know everthing, you do not have to dissolve every doubt, before you can love and serve Christ. This good confession of heart and mouth is simple enough for a child understandingly to believe it and to speak it. But it means enough to engage the faith and devout study of a life-long believer. Here is a capital note of its goodness. The light that catches the baby's eye, and leads him to see all his wonderful little world, is the same light that shines on the grown man; but how much more now does he see, and how his sight of things sweeps the very heavens! Christ is the Sun of righteousness, rising upon you with healing in His wings. The boy and the girl here may by faith behold this light of life, and they may begin to live in its brightness, and to see all the knowledge wherever it is shining. This is the beautiful simplicity of the good confession. It is simple as the sunlight is simple—clear, splendid, transcending human gaze, inexhaustible. It is simple for the little child that has faith. It is simple for some of you in those doubts and obstinate questionings that you would give the world to be able to settle. It is simple still for the long-tried believer, who has felt much and learnt much, and yet who, gray-haired and trembling, confesses from the depths of his heart, in a clear-eyed faith, "I know him whom I have believed." We confess Christ as the light of all truth, and the light of all duty, the light that shows us God, and the light that shows us man as well, and the light that reveals the glory of eternal life. We must begin with this faith, if we are

to confess the Christ of Peter, Paul, and John. But this is all that the Gospel requires us to begin with, the beginning of faith in its soundness and its simplicity—simpler than the Nicene Creed, simpler than the so-called Apostles' Creed—this good confession confessed by Timothy in his boyhood, there in Lystra, as Paul held his hand in the sight of many witnesses.

Definite the good confession is, distinct, a very form of sound words, a rigid landmark against any heresy of unbelief; and yet a confession to see more and more in—the revelation of God in Christ. We may be ever learning, and coming to a knowledge of its truth. It is sublime to stand before our fellow-men, and under the eyes of angels, and to confess, "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God," and then to go on keeping such a pledge of faith, and seeing larger and larger meanings of Christ's Sonship to God. We study Him in history, but we study Him also in the universe. He is ever for us the Babe in His mother's arms, and the Boy in the Temple, and the Man on the Cross; but He is also the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, in whom and unto whom all things were created, who is before all things, and in whom all things hold together. We believe that He taught on the Mount, and healed the sick, and raised the dead; but we believe that in the beginning He was with God, and was God, the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance, upholding all things by the word of His power. We confess that He is come in the flesh; but as we see His Gospel redeeming men, regenerating society, transforming institutions and customs, comforting the broken-hearted, scattering the darkness of the grave,

we confess, too, words of deep conviction whose meaning, making so much plain, is yet a mystery of light that shines elsewhere than we are now able to see—
“We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”

I think that we are going to prove, more and more, the wisdom and timeliness of this good confession in modern, world-wide evangelism. We see how simple it is; we see how all inclusive it is. It shows how real the Gospel is, in its purpose and power on the heart. “Say not in thy heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down:) or, who shall descend into the abyss (that is to bring Christ up from the dead).” Are you seeking salvation? Have you sought for it, and yet have not found it? Does conversion seem to you a very mysterious affair? Have you been taught that you must wait for some sudden and strange feeling as the sign of pardon from God? Have you prayed a great deal, and requested others to pray for you, that you might be saved, and still is the way dark, and do you begin to think of giving up in doubt and despair? Oh! it is unspeakably sad that ever such uncertainty should have been thrown upon the Gospel of Christ. There is nothing like it in the preaching of the Apostles. They did not go about teaching the people that salvation is to be assured in some definite and peculiar sensation, which is to be prayed for and waited for till it comes, though it be for weeks and months. No; hear how real and simple and powerful the Gospel is. “The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of

faith which we preach." Do not be trusting to your feelings by themselves. Do not be watching moods and frames of mind. Look into your heart, and see if the Word of the truth of the Gospel is there. Why, it is there, and in the hearts of hundreds like you who are sorry for your sins and willing to be saved if, as you say, you only could see how. This is the way—this word of faith become your faith, first in the heart and straightway in the mouth. "Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Salvation is just this simple, and oh! just this real. Such a simple faith, your eye not on your poor guilty heart, but upon Jesus as your Saviour and Lord. It is thus simple, if the preachers, in Paul's style, will show it to be so. The Gospel preached, the Spirit of truth in all His power producing faith in the heart, and this faith promptly, definitely, gladly confessed—ah! how our modern religious revivals need this good confession in all its scriptural distinctness and timeliness.

Shall we hear it to-night? Is there faith in your heart? Do you believe in the crucified and risen Lord? Then confess it with your mouth. Do you hesitate in fear? Are you holding back because you are ashamed? There is your trial. Your faith must come to the test, whether it be real and living. "In the sight of many witnesses"—here they are, your fellow-men, your own loved ones, beholding you, the angels of God looking down, the Lord Jesus waiting for you to confess His name. "The good confession," so simple, so beautiful, will you stand forth and courageously confess it, and begin the good fight of the faith, as God calls you to eternal life?

SERMON VI.

THE BAPTISM OF THE
BELIEVER.

VI.

THE BAPTISM OF THE BELIEVER.

“But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”—*Acts viii. 12.*

In the evangelism of the Apostles, baptism stands out plain in word and practice. In preaching the Gospel, they preached baptism invariably. Throughout the Book of the Acts, which is the great book of conversions, there is the note of baptism regularly, there is the picture of baptism regularly. It is somehow more than an incident. It appears plain, invariable, regular in doctrine and fact. Have you ever counted the times in which baptism occurs in the Book of the Acts? Have you never observed the way in which it is mentioned? Somehow the mention of it is natural. There seems to be a right place for it in evangelism. It comes up at the proper season, and duly occupies its place in the Gospel for the good of those that hear the Gospel. There is no doubt about it; there is no dispute over it. It never appears disproportioned in precept nor in practice. The mention of it every time will, if we fairly consider the facts, impress us that here is something assuredly a part of the Gospel, seasonably preached, seasonably practiced, under the blessing of God.

Let us glance over some of these mentions of bap-

tism. "They then that received his word were baptized." It is the record of the remarkable Pentecost in Jerusalem, the day of the first preaching of the full Gospel of grace—hundreds baptized on that day. "Behold, water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" It is the eager request of one man who had just heard the Gospel, and who is ready and glad to be baptized as he sees the opportunity. "Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?" It is the challenge of an Apostle. He beheld the Holy Spirit poured out upon Gentiles as well as Jews. It was time and place then for the baptism in water. Or turn and read of those first conversions in Europe, how invariable and regular the baptisms: Lydia, for instance, "and when she was baptized, and her household;" or the Philippian jailer, "and was baptized, he and all his, immediately;" or, a little later, a crowd of the citizens of Corinth, "And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." It is plain beyond all denial that those first preachers of the Gospel preached baptism as a part of the Gospel invariably. It is equally plain that those who received the Gospel were invariably and promptly baptized.

How is it to-day? I mean it for a question that ought to be asked. I mean it for a question that must be answered. How is it to-day? It is a fair, needful, wise question concerning modern evangelism. What are the facts concerning the doctrine and practice of baptism in modern evangelism? What place has baptism in modern revivals? What does the preacher say about it in the protracted meeting? Is it heard of, is it seen, in the ten days' mission? Apostolic evangel-

ism and modern evangelism, as regards baptism—how do they compare with one another? I am concerned first simply for the fact of the frequency and regularity, the invariableness, the naturalness, the seasonableness of the Apostolic precept and practice of baptism. I want you to test my statement by what you know of evangelistic services to-day. They are numerous, and growing in number. They are being held all over this nation as never before. In cities, in towns, in villages, in churches and halls, in houses and in the streets, by ordained men, by unordained men and women, by denominational representatives who emphasize their freedom of all denominations, by college-bred ministers and by unlettered proclaimers, by aged clergymen, and now by young men in the very heyday of their youth, by monks and by merchants, evangelistic services are conducted. Concerning all this evangelism I ask, has the Apostolic baptism its Apostolic place therein? Not primarily what baptism is, nor what it is for, but simply the fact of baptism at all in its Apostolic repeatedness and timeliness—do we so hear and see baptism in the Gospel meetings of the year of our Lord 1891?

Do I not speak the truth when I say that, in the majority of these services, as a rule, baptism is never heard at all, is never seen at all? Such is the fact. Somehow baptism is forgotten or ignored. Nay, the most popular evangelist of the day declares that he purposely leaves baptism out of account. He is working evangelistically, with a union of denominations, in an undenominational way; there is difference of opinion over baptism; there is controversy over it; he feels it to be his duty, he says, not to mention it, but to leave the matter wholly for settlement between

the convert and the denomination which the convert chooses to join. So it goes; intentionally or unintentionally, knowingly or ignorantly, in the evangelism of the nineteenth century, for the most part, one does not hear the like of the New Testament language, not a syllable, not a hint, but a strange silence, as regards the characteristic Apostolic commandments and practices of baptism. The tonsured monk, the godly merchant, the fervent Bible-reader, the Christian Endeavor youth, the Hallelujah lass, the earnest evangelist, as well as the ordained minister, as a rule, in meetings held for the conversion of sinners, are silent altogether concerning baptism. Mind you, I am not denoting baptism controversially, what is its action or its design. I am speaking of baptism as a fact at all in evangelism to-day. I ask you to compare Apostolic evangelism and modern evangelism, as regards baptism. In modern evangelism has it, as a rule, its own doctrine in point of place, its own practice in point of time, as these appear in Apostolic evangelism? I repeat the question, have we to-day, in world-wide preaching of the Gospel, in Kentucky, in New York, in India, in China, in the islands of the sea, the frequency and regularity, the invariableness, the naturalness, the seasonableness of the Apostolic precept and practice of baptism?

This strange lack of the Apostolic ministry of baptism must come a good deal from an under-estimate or misunderstanding of the place and meaning of baptism in the Apostolic ministry of the Gospel. I know there is danger of making too much of baptism. The sacerdotal theory does make too much of it. We well recoil in horror from Augustine's doctrine that unbap-

tized infants are deprived of Heaven. We should give no countenance to the hurried sprinkling of water on an unconscious dying man, in the hope of thus saving him from Hell. But there is danger of making too little of baptism. All this way of overlooking baptism in Protestant evangelism, and even talking of it slightly—it results, we may be sure, from what Schaff calls “the low rationalistic view” prevalent on the subject. Now let us hear the Word of God, as it strikingly teaches a place and meaning of baptism in the Gospel of salvation. “But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” Here is the Gospel. Here is the Gospel preached. Here is the Gospel of God’s kingdom and Jesus Christ’s name. And here is baptism, in sense and dignity joined with this Gospel. Somehow there was something in such a Gospel preached that led these men and women naturally, promptly, immediately to be baptized. Do you observe just where their baptism hinged? “When they believed Philip preaching good tidings, they were baptized.” Their faith, born of the Gospel, led them to their prompt baptism. It was the baptism of believers. What they believed in the Gospel, the very reason of their believing it, their living faith moved them to baptism.

There must have been a spiritual good in that baptism of faith. Philip must have preached it in the good tidings. The men and women must have heard it and appreciated it so as to have been immediately baptized as a consequence of their faith. The Gospel of salvation, preached for faith and to

faith, must show some meaning of salvation in baptism, and show it practically for the good of the one baptized, if his faith so directly issues in baptism. It is no exceptional Scripture. To it agree all the Scriptures of baptism. All of them that teach the meaning of baptism, teach it in some real relation to salvation. To it agree the Catholic creeds of Christendom. All of them confess a real relation of baptism to salvation. "Baptism doth now save us," is the explicit truth of God's Word. "I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins," is the unmistakable note of the old Nicene creed. It is worth while knowing to-night the scriptural relation of baptism and salvation, why a believer should of course be baptized, in what sense the old creed associates baptism and the remission of sins. The Gospel proclaims a practical good to you, if you are baptized in faith. As you truly believe the good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, what teaches the Word as to the relation of baptism to your salvation, that you should therefore gladly and promptly be baptized? In what sense does baptism save you, in what sense is it for the remission of sins? Let the light of God's Word here help your faith, while it rebukes the ignorance and silence as to baptism in so much evangelistic work to-day.

In what sense does baptism save us, in what sense is it for the remission of our sins? According to the Scriptures,—

1. In the sense of *representation*. It is a form, but it represents a reality of God and man. It is a material element, but it represents a spiritual presence. It is a bodily action, but it represents a spiritual will. It

is absurd to classify it with the washings of the Jewish law, "carnal ordinances imposed until a time of reformation." It is ignorance to call it "a mere outward rite," or "only an external bodily act," and to put it on a level with ceremonies of human organizations. No; baptism, belonging to the Gospel of truth and grace, is a spiritual institution, representing a reality of God and man, or it is lower even than a heathen fetich. But, belonging to a spiritual dispensation, it is a spiritual institution representatively, as it both beautifully and helpfully pictures to a penitent believer his salvation in the name of Christ. "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." So Saul, penitent and praying, hears Ananias's urgent exhortation. The water of his baptism would appropriately represent the washing away of his sins in the blood of Jesus Christ. So, too, Paul teaches that baptism is a symbol of the death and resurrection of Christ. To be "baptized into Christ," is to be "baptized into his death." The baptism involves a burial, a burial "with him through baptism into death," and to this end, "that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." In both of these Scriptures, where baptism is a representation of salvation—in the first, the material element furnishing the figure; in the second, the bodily action becoming the symbol—the representation is not merely a poetic figure nor an ornamental symbol. It is the representation of salvation in reality—the representation of a real cleansing from sin, the representation of a real death to sin, and of a real resurrection to a new life—this spiritual realness alone giving sense

and propriety to baptism in its element and action. There is a real presence and power of God in baptism : there is a real experience of man in baptism. "Having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word," says Paul again, making baptism a picture of purification, and so representing it because something more than water is there—the very Word of God in all its spirit and life, being there. "Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead," once more says the Apostle, making baptism a figure of burial and resurrection, and so representing it because something more than bodily action is there—the very energy of God, in which the baptized man trusts, being there.

2. In the sense of *confirmation*. It is a form, a material element, a bodily action ; but it is the confirmation of the forgiveness of sins. The records of baptism in the New Testament would be absurd unless, while narrating the regularity, the promptness, the eagerness of the baptisms, they prove, directly and indirectly, that baptism was to a penitent believer a confirmation of salvation. Do not the Scriptures here carry such an inevitable conviction to an unprejudiced reading? Look again at that remarkable scene in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. The plain history is, "They then that received his word were baptized." And the plain word of Peter was, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins." Or hear the commission of the Lord Himself—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation : he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Put

that alongside of Ananias's exhortation to Saul, as he finds Saul repenting and praying—"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." Baptism and salvation coupled in the world-wide commission, baptism and forgiveness heard together in Apostolic preaching, and penitent believers universally, readily, gladly baptized—what was their baptism but a real confirmation of a real salvation in a real experience of their lives?

3. In the sense of *association*. It is a form, a material element, a bodily action; but it is the real association of the salvation of one with the salvation of others, a real association of you and me in our salvation with others in their salvation, as we altogether have a real union and communion with God. So again reads the great commission, "Make disciples of all the nations;" and this discipleship, in its making, realizes in baptism the highest fellowship of which man is capable—"baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Your or my salvation is not in selfish isolation. It is organic, with one another, and through one another. We Gentiles, verily, "are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel." In the true and profound sense, our salvation is in "the Church," which is "the body" of Christ, "the fullness of him that filleth all in all." It is, of course, according to the sound Protestant idea and against the Romish notion, our relation to Christ that determines our relation to the Church, not our relation to the Church that determines our relation to Christ; but it would be more accurately scriptural to say that in our relation to Christ is determined

necessarily our relation to the Church. The salvation in Christ is a fellowship of salvation, and it is a fellowship of salvation according as He is "himself the Saviour of the body." This principle of association is impressively stated by Paul. To be baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, to be baptized into Jesus Christ, to be baptized into His death, to be baptized into His name, carries in it an association of the blessings of salvation. "For in one Spirit," says Paul impressively, giving the necessary reason of the organic relations of the redeemed, and stating first the vital, spiritual element which enveloped them when baptized, "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit." Salvation thus viewed as a blessing organically, in a body, in a Church, in a kingdom, is taught by our Lord in His startling words to Nicodemus. The note of a spiritual salvation He unmistakably gives along with the note of a baptism in water, which associates the salvation of one with the salvation of others in the kingdom of God—"Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God." Again, it is of those who received the word of Peter, and were baptized, that the fact is immediately narrated: "And there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls;" and this significant predicate, "added unto them," has the light of its vital meaning a little further on in the verse, "And the Lord added to them," or "together," "day by day those that were being saved." The association of penitent believers by baptism was in a process of salvation.

4. In the sense of *consummation*. According to the Apostolic ministry, it was penitent believers that were baptized. It was not unconscious infants. It was not unawakened sinners. Baptism was not the first and only step in the way of salvation. Again and again, in varied ways, are hearing, faith, repentance, confession, mentioned as facts in the way of salvation. In no one aspect is salvation moving to a consummation more strikingly set forth than in the doctrine of it as a conversion, especially now in the accurate renderings of the Revised Version. The Scriptures speak of turning, and becoming as little children; of perceiving with the eyes, hearing with the ears, understanding with the heart, and turning again to be healed; of believing, and turning to the Lord; of repenting, and turning to God. But the Scriptures never speak of being baptized and turning. For a very apparent reason. Hearing, understanding, believing, repenting, each of these, all of these, implied in some general mention of conversion, while again spoken of specifically, now one, now another, in connection with conversion, leaving yet some aspect of conversion to be explained beyond hearing, beyond understanding, beyond faith, beyond repentance, simply, according to Apostolic teaching and practice, leaves baptism as the final step, the final fact, of conversion. Fully confirming this sense of the consummation of salvation in baptism, is the fact that salvation is so specifically mentioned with faith, repentance, confession, viewed as steps in the way of salvation. The Scriptures are numerous. "Every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins." "Repentance and remission of sins should be

preached in his name." "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The Scriptures are numerous, various, emphatic—too many to be indicated here—faith and life, repentance and remission, confession and salvation. But are we to think that the Scriptures speak in vain when they say in so many words, "Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism"? If with faith, with repentance, with confession, salvation is connected, these going before baptism, and if with baptism also, coming after these, salvation is coupled, then salvation must have in baptism a real, not a fictitious, consummation, and this consummation is real because salvation has a real, not a fictitious, existence in faith, repentance, confession, as the antecedents of baptism.

Is not this Apostolic teaching of baptism clear, beyond all misunderstanding? If you come to baptism in the right way, it represents your salvation in a real experience of the eternal redemption obtained by the Son of God. If you come to baptism in the right way, it confirms your salvation as you began to know it in the work of the Spirit of truth in your heart. If you come to baptism in the right way, it associates your salvation blessedly with the salvation of others. If you come to baptism in the right way, it consummates your salvation as a crisis of the present, which gives assurance and hope of your salvation daily in all your faith and obedience of the future.

We have, therefore, two lessons to learn about the Apostolic baptism—its *spiritual atmosphere* and its *practical urgency*. "Behold, water! what doth hinder me to be baptized?" was the eager question of an inquirer who had just heard the same Philip preach Jesus. But

we may be sure that he saw something more than water. We may be sure that he had heard of something besides water. There was a spiritual atmosphere all about him, as he spoke aloud his urgent inquiry. There was something more than water in his view and in his experience. Over the water there would be the sacred name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Under the water there would be the reconciling death of Jesus Christ. In the water there would be a penitent believer, calling on the name of the Lord; and in this believer's baptism there would be a presence, more than water, enveloping his mind and heart, the light and strength of his obedience, and his refreshment daily, according to the precious Scripture, "In one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were made to drink of one Spirit." It was a baptism in water. It was the baptism of a penitent believer in water. It was the baptism of a penitent believer in water, into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It was the baptism of a penitent believer in water, into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, as it was equally a baptism of him in the Spirit, according to the Spirit's power of conviction and sanctification.

So large, and free, and real, and full was the salvation of which the inquirer heard. Oh! let us open our eyes to behold this salvation, as it shines in the light of God's own Word. I am afraid that we have been impoverishing our minds and hearts by not appreciating all the doctrine of salvation in the Scriptures. It is a salvation in "hope of eternal life, which God, who can not lie, promised before times eternal; but in his own

seasons manifested his word in the message." It is God who saves, and He "saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, but hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who abolished death, and brought light and incorruption to light through the gospel." It is a salvation of God, whose blessing for man speaks in this real truth to man—"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses." It is a salvation that large, and free, and real, and full, because, again, "God is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe;" or, "The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men." There it was in the Gospel, free and real, brought to men for them to hear it and receive it and live every day in the experience of it. There it was in the Gospel, as the Holy Spirit brought it home to the minds and hearts of men in the precepts and promises of the Gospel. It was the very salvation of God which the inquirer heard Philip preach in preaching Jesus. It was a real salvation upon him and in him, as he heard it with a hungry heart. It was a real salvation upon him and in him more and more as he heard it, without a doubt, eagerly in draughts of living faith. It was a real salvation upon him and in him, enlightening his mind, renewing his heart, invigorating his will for all righteous living. Verily it was salvation upon him and in him, which, under Philip's preaching, evoked the cry, "Behold, water! what doth hinder me to be baptized." Baptism, not as a thing of magic, manipulated by priestly hands for some mysterious good—

that makes too much of it ; not as a mere rite nor bare symbol, empty of any spiritual good—that makes too little of it: but baptism in the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, as a due part of the world-wide Gospel, in a spiritual light, with a spiritual power, with a spiritual blessing—for this the penitent, prayerful, glad believer went down into the water, where Philip baptized him. There his salvation was really and beautifully represented. There his salvation was really and helpfully confirmed. There his salvation was really and blessedly associated with the salvation of others. There his salvation was really and uniquely consummated, as a memory and motive for all subsequent faith and duty in the daily experience of his salvation in the daily process of his obedience to his Saviour and Lord.

The Apostolic baptism could but be urgent. Is it not plain why it was invariably preached in the Apostolic Gospel, and why believers were promptly and gladly baptized? It all meant that salvation was urgent. The herald of the Gospel went everywhere, proclaiming, “Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” It was no fiction. It was no guess-work. It was a living reality of God, as He called to men in the Son of His love. It was so real and plain that, as we read those conversions in the Book of the Acts, never once do we read of any agonizing delays of salvation, never once a weary waiting for salvation, never once a disappointment as to salvation, when there was hunger and inquiry for it. Read those conversions—thousands at a time, one at a time, crowds in a city, a pilgrim alone on his journey; all sorts and conditions of men, priests, soldiers, philosophers, tradesmen; both sexes, all ages, the man, the

woman, the child ; all grades of persons, the murderer, the drunkard, the idolater, the thief, harlots and adulterers, the devotee at prayer, fathers and mothers as they read the Scriptures, sons and daughters as they were trained in the truth and looked for more light ; everywhere, in Judea, Samaria, Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, Italy, in the capital cities of the world, everywhere, from Jerusalem and round about even unto Illyricum—and every time in those conversions the salvation of the Gospel is seen real and urgent. It is preached to the hearer, offered to him, pressed upon him, preached in sweet promises, and preached in terrible warnings. Listen to Paul as he tells us how real and urgent the salvation, and why really and urgently he preached it. “For the love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died.” So real and powerful was the death of Christ for all men, as it wrought the death of all men to sin potentially in His death for sin. That was the measure of Christ’s love, and the real, working force of Christ’s love ; and Paul went about preaching it urgently, holding out the high hope, “And he died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again.” So great and real and urgent was the salvation of the Gospel, to hear it, to receive it, to know it, to enjoy it, to live in it to-day and forever. It was not baptism that was first urgent. It was the free, real salvation, as consummated in the death of Christ, and preached to the whole creation, that was first urgent. It was this salvation that made every man so responsible. Henceforth to disbelieve that would be the great sin. The Spirit of truth would convict the world of

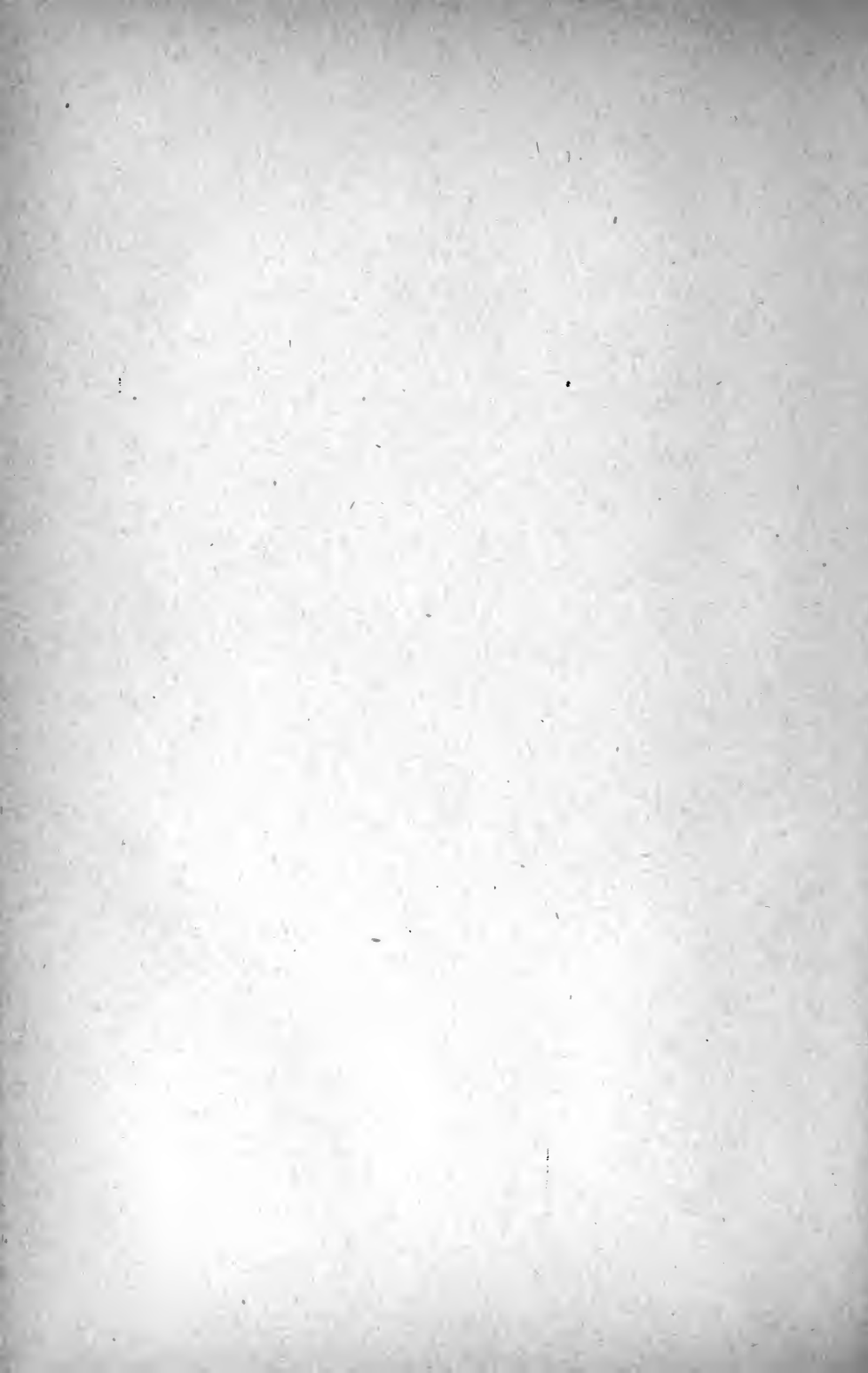
sin for not believing on the Son of God as "the Saviour of the world," the Lamb of God "which taketh away the sin of the world." The urgent salvation, free, real, preached, offered, pressed home upon men in the Gospel, this is what they heard as they resisted not the Spirit of truth, this they received in their hearts as they duly believed it; and in this living faith they gladly went down into the waters of baptism. For their baptism, glad, prompt, eager, was, according to God's Word, a beautiful and appropriate step in the process of their obedience, in which, as the outflow and proof of a living faith, they should receive and know more and more of the real salvation, whose foretaste and whose end should be eternal life.

Let us restore this Apostolic baptism in world-wide evangelism to-day. Do not make too much of it; but do not ignore it nor slight it. Do not make too little of it; but preach and practice it in Apostolic simplicity and beauty. We shall certainly see its place and its good in the Gospel, as we preach the Gospel of salvation in all of its real good for humanity. It is for you to hear the Gospel of your salvation. Christ died for you. God was in Christ reconciling you unto Himself, loving you, forgiving you; and you hear this very moment the word of reconciliation. Do you believe it? Will you open your heart to it? Will you receive it in a childlike faith, this Gospel of your salvation? Then it is time for you to be baptized. I preach the truth to you faithfully and helpfully. It is time for you to be baptized, according to the old Apostolic baptism. If you believe in your heart the good tidings of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, be baptized. The salvation of the Gospel is urgent for your

hearing and believing it. As you hear and believe it, oh! tell me, does not its urgency move you to confess it and live evermore in knowledge of it, in daily peace and hope? It is time for you to be baptized. Your baptism will not only beautifully represent your salvation. It will not only helpfully confirm your salvation. It will not only blessedly associate your salvation with the salvation of others. But, mark!—it will consummate your salvation in the obedience of your faith. Your obedience of faith in baptism will be the type, the beginning, the ideal of all your obedience throughout your life, while you realize and enjoy more and more all the blessing of salvation in fellowship with Jesus Christ our Lord, in hope of eternal glory.

SERMON VII.

CONVERSION OF YOUNG
PEOPLE.



VII.

CONVERSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

“And that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”—*II. Tim. iii. 15.*

It is no longer a novelty, a strain of interest, for the pulpit to set its heart and eye on the young people present, and to preach the Gospel specially to them while speaking specially in behalf of them. What are the facts? Why, some of the finest activities of civilization are centering more and more on child-life. Hundreds of wise persons are thinking of the child—its nature, its needs, its promise—where one thought a century ago. Hundreds of philanthropists are working for the child where an age ago no one worked. Does a child need protection, sometimes very special protection, from the greed of capital, and even from the selfishness of its parents? The hand of the law has been raised in its behalf, and forever forbids that its little body shall be pinched and dwarfed by hard, unhealthful labor in factory or mine. Can a child learn early, and can it learn rapidly? can knowledge be broken up small enough for its bird-like mouth? And Froebel with the spirit of Christ saying, “Come, let us live for the children,” answers with his wonderful kindergarten. Can a child be taught truth by stories, by picture, by song? And the genius of fiction and of art and of

poetry answers with the heart and glory of their work. Can a child be brought to Christ, and live as one of His disciples? And surely the medieval nightmares of theology, with their falsities about children, pass away, and the Sunday-school arises in rebuke of scholastic errors, and gathers the lambs to its bosom, and teaches them the way of the Lord.

The facts are luminous, radiant with hope for the good of humanity. The cry of Hagar's child, thirsting and dying, is heard, and eyes of love are seeing wells of water, and bringing cheer and refreshment. We are beginning to see to-day that little maidens can be touched by human want and woe, and can become a band of a hundred to do good where the Lord opens the door. Strong men and women are ready and glad to be fulfilling the oldtime prophecy that a little child shall lead them; and we appreciate as never before what the Master meant when He set a little child in the midst of His disciples, as He taught them concerning His Kingdom.

All of this growing interest, this large service, in behalf of the young, we want thus to appreciate in the light of the Bible—its memories, its precepts, its promises concerning children. This interest is of God. It is the fruitage of the Gospel of His Son. Is there any doubt of it? Or, if there is no doubt of it, yet is there a lack of full, positive, hearty appreciation of it? Are any of us practically skeptical about the conversion and spiritual training of youth? Whenever your boy comes to you, and of his own accord proposes to confess Christ publicly, does it trouble you, and do you put him off with vague excuses? Do any of us hold to that old notion, and do we unhesitatingly, un-

blushingly proclaim it? "Oh, I believe in waiting until children are grown, so that they will know what they are doing, and can choose for themselves." Is the secret of this unbelief and indifference that, in the Bible, in the New Testament, especially in the Book of the Acts, the great book of conversions, there appears no distinct instances of child conversion, no express mention of the conversion of one by one, nor one after the other, nor many of them together, while the conversion of adults seems to be absolutely the rule, whether of one man or one woman, or of a large class or some vast crowd in a triumphant day?

Let us look all around the subject, and know the truth and mark our duty. Yes; as we read the history of the progress of the Gospel under Apostolic preaching, it seems that adult conversion is absolutely the rule. The children are out of sight. They make no clear-cut, familiar figure whatever. They do not sit in the front pews nor around the pulpit as Peter preaches on the day of Pentecost. They do not come tripping along with the visitors to Paul's hired house in Rome, thirty years afterwards, to be taught specially the Way of salvation. Nowhere do we read of "Children's Meetings," "Children's Day," "Children's Hour." Are the little ones forgotten? Does not God hear their cry?

Stop. Let us read more carefully, both on the lines and between the lines. Read again Peter's sermon in Acts ii.,—the first complete, full, authoritative proclamation of the Gospel to mankind. The children are not forgotten. They are distinctly mentioned. "For to you is the promise, and to your children," as well as "to all that are afar off." The promise, the

promise of the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit—it was to those Jews standing there, trembling and convicted, and it was also to their children, as well as to the Gentile world. Let no preacher, in a controversial spirit, slur that phrase—“to your children.” It does not require to be emptied of its plain, scriptural meaning, in any supposed interests of doctrinal harmony. It is not a rhetorical generality for posterity, in a vague, indefinable sense. It is primarily specific. It means first the children, the living children, of those living Jewish parents. That would be the only way a Jew could first understand the language. It would be altogether natural for him to understand the words in this sense. A man who was taught that “children are a heritage of the Lord ;” who was commanded to teach diligently to his children the words of the law ; who knew from his Bible that God’s very purpose in the origin and propagation of the race from one pair of creatures, was that there might be “a godly seed ;” who remembered the poetic note of his religion, “O Lord God, thou art my trust from my youth ;” who believed that Jehovah was “a father of the fatherless,”—that man would rather have been astonished if a blessing of Heaven came to him which was not also promised to his children. “For to you is the promise, and to your children”—we may be sure that every Jewish father went home that day, rejoicing that, of course, his children were included in this promise of the salvation of the Gospel, now preached for the first time in the name of the crucified and risen Lord.

But while we are not to dilute the phrase, “your children,” we are not to stretch it nor make a blind

fetich of it. The promise was to Jewish children. It was also to Gentile children. It was specifically to all of them in their tender years. But, while it was to them as children, it was theirs meaningly and consciously, as they accepted it, understood it, believed it, appropriated it. They did not have to wait until they were grown before they could rejoice in it. No fancied scripturality of adult conversion alone should be allowed to interpret the words, "your children," as only a convenient expression of future descendants, who will be expected first to become far perverted in sin before the Gospel can begin its work of converting them to righteousness. The words involve the idea of posterity, generations yet unborn; but that very idea is involved because the salvation is promised first to the young as young. Children they were, children they were, growing up, the children of parents who were becoming Christians under a new and better covenant; and it was the blessing of the Gospel that children, too, should have part in the covenant, not because of bare flesh and blood kinship, but as, in this organic relationship of the family, an institution of God, they should hear the Word, should learn the Way, should, without any established age, but as soon as possible, intelligently confess the good confession, and be baptized.

This is the light that has always been in God's Word as regards the conversion of children. It has always been there, ready to break out, right there in the Book of the Acts, if only our eyes are thoughtfully open to behold it, instead of being blinded amid the dust of theological controversy. The children are not forgotten. They are blessed with their faithful parents.

That is the sweet lesson of household conversions recorded in the Book of the Acts. Five households we read of, who turned to God under Apostolic preaching. It was no unusual event. It was not a surprise then, as, alas! it would be now. The record of it is too natural, too matter-of-course, too beautiful just in its place, for such a conversion to be some novelty of Gospel application or some astonishing development of human life. Five instances of household conversions—Gentiles as well as Jews—one in Judea, two in Philippi, two in Corinth—why, it is altogether reasonable to conclude, from these typical instances of time, place, persons, incidents, that if all the cases of household conversions occurring during the Apostolic ministry had been recorded, the Book of the Acts would not contain them!

The record of them, the very style, in its minute words, is a mighty truth against two ecclesiastical extremes of the ages—I mean, against Pædobaptists on the one side, and Baptists on the other. There can be no logic of infant baptism in these household conversions. Many Pædobaptist scholars candidly admit this lack of proof, and candidly concede that such a practice is an unnecessary, far-fetched inference, if based upon these Scriptures. In four of the five instances, expressly so, where any fact is predicated of the households besides their baptisms, or in connection with their baptisms, it necessarily implies conscious, intelligent activity on their part. Cornelius, and his household, as he himself said, “all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord,” spoke with tongues, and magnified God. The baptized Philippian jailer “re-

joiced greatly with all his house, having believed in God." "Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house." Paul baptized also in Corinth "the household of Stephanas;" and Paul writes of the house of Stephanas that "they have set themselves to minister unto the saints."

But if these facts told of these household conversions and baptisms nullify any proof or obligation of infant baptism, other facts ought to wake up the Baptists, and cause them to see what one-sided stress they have put on individual, if not also on adult, conversion. If Pædobaptists must acknowledge the absence of scriptural authority for the waning institution of infant baptism, Baptists must confront the facts, and explain and appreciate the naturalness, the frequency, the emphasis of household, as well as individual, conversions in the Book of the Acts. Of the eighteen or twenty distinct instances of Apostolic conversions, five are expressly, luminously, household conversions. How is this? Why do the Apostles aim so directly at this end? Why do they so promptly and easily speak so inclusively? "Words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house"—"Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house"—how usual this sounds, how familiarly expectant! And every time there was no disappointment. The Gospel was preached, and the households believed, rejoicing in salvation. That there were children in those homes, old enough to believe and confess Christ intelligently, is altogether reasonably concluded. Nay, the sixth household, logically included in these Apostolic conversions, felicitously illustrates this fact. It is the logic of our text. Paul, on his first missionary journey, preach-

ing the Gospel in Lystra amid persecutions—a Jewish family, grandmother, mother, grandson, Lois, Eunice, Timothy, Timothy then a boy—again, the whole family becoming Christians under the Gospel, the child Timothy confessing the good confession along with faithful Lois and Eunice—so glows another beautiful instance of household conversions.

A weighty, significant lesson it all is for the Baptists. The fact convicts them of not caring enough for the children. It is a poor, pitiful triumph of debate just to prove the unnaturalness, the uselessness, the needlessness of infant baptism, and stop there, as if our duty is done. On the contrary, the real duty then really begins. There is a discharge of spiritual obligation to children, bound upon Baptists as well as Pædobaptists. It is not scriptural to wait until children are grown before teaching them the Way and exhorting them to turn to the Lord. It is not scriptural to address the Gospel exclusively to adults, with never a direct, exultant, hopeful word to the young. It is not scriptural to expect conversions of successive generations only as each one takes place in lonely isolation of manhood, under an abstract singularity of influences, with no reference to what has gone before him in point of time nor what has been done for him in virtue of environment. It is not scriptural to look upon the little ones as without God, and without hope in the world. It is not scriptural to hold a vague theory that somehow infants, dying in infancy, go to Heaven spotless, guiltless, never having sinned, and then to work a rigid practice of preaching salvation to grown sinners, while all the time, both with a loose theory and a looser practice, making and taking little account of boys and girls

growing up, five years old, seven years old, ten years old, who are beginning to know sin in power and guilt, and to know right and wrong in conflict, and to know responsibility in conscience, and to know God in the simple faith and healthy fear of a child's heart.

Let us wake up on this question, and think and act according to the Word of God concerning childhood. Let there be a revision of our knowledge, if haply thus there may come a revision of our practice. We may well ask ourselves how it was, according to the Apostolic ministry of the Gospel, that the faith of grandparents descended so regularly, so beautifully, to the second and third generations. We may ponder on the words of the Apostle of love, as, in old age, he writes an Epistle to a Christian woman, and says not only, "unto the elect lady," but naturally, familiarly, "and her children," and then pens a congratulatory note concerning some of the children whom he had met away from their home—"I rejoice greatly that I have found certain of thy children walking in truth." We may still wonder as, in the same Epistle, the aged writer, conveying a Christian salutation, delicately allows it to be worded in the name of the younger members of that family—"The children of thine elect sister salute thee." We may rightly muse, in holy imagination, over that exquisite picture of Apostolic fellowship where the faces of the children, too, are wet with tears, in the company of disciples standing on the sea coast of Tyre—"And they all, with wives and children, brought us on our way, till we were out of the city: and kneeling down on the beach, we prayed, and bade each other farewell." The children, kneeling around Paul in

prayer! Do you suppose they ever forgot that scene, or forgot Paul?

According to the Word of God—let us so think and act concerning the children. Have we heard the doctrine of Jesus? Is it anything for us, and to us? Does it teach us faith and duty as regards childhood? Does it engender a spirit towards children which we dare not lack, and the possession of which, as Christ had it, insures a whole round of thought, study, hope, service for them, as we lead a whole round of life both for them and with them? “Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven”—“Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me”—“See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven”—“It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish”—these sayings of Christ, have we ever fully appreciated them, fathomed their depths, scaled their heights, measured their lengths and breadths? Are these words, so unique, so generous, regulative forces in our lives, and do we feel their effects whenever we look at a little child? Grant that they are ideals, that they do not depict the actual character of all children, that they only indicate the capacities and possibilities of every child. Just so. Then what do we find that these hopeful ideals make us habitually think about childhood, and what habitually and hopefully do in its behalf? Do the high, solemn, luminous, divine moments in our life ever come when, in the spirit of Christ, imitating Christ, we put our hands on little children, and pray

for them—aye, pray for ourselves, too, as the light of truth illumines our hearts, and thrills us with its glory —“ For of such is the kingdom of God ” ?

A sublime standard, indeed ! Well, if the Kingdom of God is rightly theirs in spirit and germ, if the little ones are so dear to Christ, if He darkly warns you and me not to cause one of these little ones that believe on Him to stumble, what are we parents, elders, Sunday-school teachers doing that the Kingdom of God may be the child's growingly and knowingly ? There is a large, sweet, serious, beautiful, hopeful duty that we all owe to the children, as we hear the ideal words of Christ, as we behold the household conversions of Apostolic ministry. This teaching of Christ, these Apostolic conversions, agree with all the rest, so much else, of the Bible as it speaks variedly for the young and to the young. Are we slighting the fact, disbelieving it, ignoring it, beating around the duty, and losing a great blessing, because of rigid theological notions ? Do we hold that children have no covenant relation whatever to Christ ? Are we to entertain some hard and fast theory of regeneration which sees no good of the Gospel for a child until it undergoes a certain marked exercise, when, and only when, we straightway call it “ regenerated,” and in no sense at all before ? Is conversion such a fixed and exclusive experience that children can know nothing of it except in a peculiar sensation or a definite procedure ? Would you dare to tell your little boy that, as he is yet “ unregenerated,” his prayers are an abomination to the Lord ? Could you consent to debate, as it was debated in a religious journal of the nineteenth century, whether it is scriptural to teach a child to pray at all before it is old

enough to be scripturally baptized? Would you dare to teach your little girl that she must wait until she is "converted" before she can do anything pleasing to God? Is it only a figure of speech to instruct a naughty child, now sorry and tearful, to ask God to forgive it, while really there is no actual promise nor bestowal of forgiveness on the little lamb, but only a dramatic rehearsal and preparation for pardon at some future time? Was it a fact that Jesus was well pleased with the hosannas of the children in the Temple, and justified the act by a Scripture; but is it now a fact that He authorizes no assurance of His pleasure in the children's songs of praise in the Sunday-school or the family? Is the attitude of God toward a child veiled in impenetrable mystery? Are we to conclude, according to the old Baptist notion, that a child can learn nothing of religion, as religion, for its good? Or, if this is too absurd to believe, are we to judge that a child can be taught the facts and morals of the Bible, and habituated to pray just for the sake of the habit, but that any reality of God's pleasure in the child, or any spiritual life and growth of the child itself, are, at best, only vague uncertainties, which it is unprofitable to consider?

I ask the pointed question, that we may be aroused to appreciate duly the real teaching of the Bible on this subject. What we as Christians must do for our children, in hope of God's blessing, is like in spirit to what Jewish parents were taught to do for theirs, only a greater good, according as we live under a better dispensation. There is precept of it, and promise of it, and living example of it—all in Paul's Epistles. Listen to the Christian's duty toward his children, and the

children's duty toward their Christian parents. "Nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord," says Paul to the parents. "Obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord;" "Honor thy father and mother, that it may be well with thee," says Paul to the children. There are the precepts and the promises. And now let us open our eyes, and behold the shining example of childhood under spiritual culture. The Revised Version is very explicit and endlessly suggestive. Paul is exhorting Timothy: "But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them: and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

The precepts, the promises, the shining example—while they are real with daily responsibility, are they not also beautiful and hopeful ideals? They must be interpreted together. The three agree in one. They show that God meant untold spiritual good to grow in and out of the relationships of the family. The natural ties of fatherhood, motherhood, childhood, are to be channels of His grace. In these sweet human affections, illumined, purified, the love of God to us is to be all the better realized in fine growths of knowledge, and His will concerning us is to be learned more sweetly and surely amid mutual studies and prayer. This kinship of blood is not just an instinct to feed and clothe children, and to teach them only decent morals, as any good Pagan parent would do; but it is a bond of God's own hand, which He means for all the stronger, nobler motive to know and serve Him. The needs of life, the

capacities of life, the duties of life, the aspirations of life, as seen budding in the child, as seen fructifying in father and mother, themselves children such a little while ago—all these are to have in them the lights of God, the precepts of God, the promises of God, as sure, steadfast influences present forever.

I certainly do not interpret the Scriptures wrongly nor unduly. They seem to me very wide and deep. Do they not teach that the life of every child ought to be at once moral and religious, with God's Word as the light and strength of it from the cradle to the grave? And do they not teach that all these moral and spiritual influences ought to be brought to bear upon the child's life, according to its realization, and ever towards its realization, of the Gospel in fact, precept, promise? Surely this is what Paul means in his vital, vivid words. "Nurture them," he says. It is a sweet, delicate, patient process day by day—more than talk, more than lecturing, the very life and love of the parent's spirit hovering over, brooding over, resting upon the spirit of the child. Language can not express it. It is deeper than thought. It is the fullness of a father's care—it is the divineness of a mother's sacrifice. And this nurture has plans and wisdom. It chastens, it disciplines, it trains. There is the study of the child's temperament, the training of it with reference to disposition, taste, talent, the regulation of everything—books, companionship, taste, amusements, environment—as the totality of these go to make the character of the child. And admonition has its place—distinct voices of duty, corrective speeches, inciting tones, line upon line, precept upon precept. And the Lord is to be in it all! It is to be of Him, and from Him—

the Lord's presence, the Lord's providence, the Lord's fullness of blessing. There He is for father and mother, and there He is for the child. The parent's teaching and training are to have their secret source in Him. The children's obedience is to be really in fellowship with Him—"well-pleasing in the Lord."

The precepts and promises shine illustriously in the example. There was the family, named by Paul; and a time came when mother and grandmother smiled upon a new-born babe. The parents were pious. They believed in God. They waited for the hope of Israel. We may be sure that they taught the growing boy good morals—not to swear, not to lie, not to steal, to be industrious, to obey their word. But with them morals were religion. They never taught morals except along with religion. When the boy heard what was right, he heard it in the name of God. He learned his duty to fear God as he learned his duty to obey his parents. When he was taught to love his fellow-man, he had also been taught first to love God. At his mother's knee, with the Book of their religion unrolled before their eager eyes, he had learned its law, its songs, its prophecies; and now still a child, believing in God, he had learned also to hope for a Messiah yet to come with light and blessing. And now when at last the glad tidings went forth, from Jerusalem to Antioch, from Antioch to Cyprus, on, on, until they were preached in the streets and homes of Lystra, and the grandmother and mother hastened to hear, and readily believed, it came to pass that the child also believed. Of course. It was the fruit of family piety. It was the sure outcome of nurture in the chastening and admonition of the Lord, and of obedience to

one's parents in the Lord. The Scripture touch is exquisite—"the unfeigned faith that is in thee; which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and, I am persuaded, in thee also." It was truly a hereditary faith, an inheritance in the child not by miracle nor magic, not a mere infection of blood, but read in the light of a mother's eye, seen in the beauty of a mother's example, felt in the brooding of a mother's spirit, understood in the lessons of a mother's love, heard in the faith of a mother's prayer. It had in it evermore the sweetness and strength of human memory, how it had come—"But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." But it was a faith that would grow forever in the light of a divine reason, whence it had come—"and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

This is the ideal of the Gospel of childhood. Rather, it was the reality of Christ's religion as seen both in parenthood and childhood. It is the example of religion in the family. It is the life of father, mother, child, one life of spirit, thought, service, hid with Christ in God. See father and mother, on their part—yes, verily, first on their part—loving one another in the light of what they may become as children of God; loving the child as a gift of God, a heritage of the Lord; sanctifying themselves in heart and example for the child's sake; training themselves all the more sedulously in righteousness as they mark the ideal toward which the child ought to be trained; practicing patience and self-control for the child's sake: this is the

kind of parents from whom the child is to learn the lessons of religion. And lessons of religion it is chiefly to learn in its moral training—the truth of the religion of Jesus Christ. The child of the Christian is to begin to learn the Gospel story as soon as it begins to learn anything of moral truth and duty. It may be taught faith in God, as it is taught to obey its parents. It may be trained to love Christ, as it is trained to be good. The redemption of the Gospel has sweet, simple influences on a child's heart, as the child sees right and wrong, and feels the responsibility of doing right and not doing wrong, and feels the need of forgiveness when it has done wrong—this, even while the responsibility of the child has not yet distinctly developed in a conscious individuality, and its will is so deeply dependent on the authority and bent of the parent's will. Have we not seen it verified in the lives of children, so that we must say unhesitatingly, Yes, Christ's religion has stages of light and faith for a child?

A father meets with a terrible accident that threatens the loss of both eyes. In the excitement of an evening, no one notices the absence of the youngest child, a daughter six years old. When relief has been given, there are wondering inquiry and search for the pet of the household. The little one is found in a dark, isolated room of the mansion, on her knees, weeping, praying God to "please cure poor papa, and not let him go blind." Do you have any doubt of that faith? Do you not think that God was real to that child? Do you not believe that her prayer went up for a memorial before Him?

A boy ten years of age lies upon his sick-bed, convalescing, after the long battle with fever, weak, pale,

thoughtful. One day he called his devoted mother to his side, and asked her to bend down; he had something to tell her. And with his thin arms around her neck, he spoke from the heart—"Mamma, I am so glad that I am going to get well; I was n't always a good boy when I was well; I used to say naughty words when I played with the other boys; but I have asked God to forgive me, and I am going to be a better boy when I get up again." Who questions there was joy in Heaven over that child's repentance, as he found his way back to duty, believing in the goodness and grace of God?

A little girl barely four years old, tired, sleepy, falls asleep, sitting in the big-armed chair, and the loving mother deftly undresses her, and tucks her in bed, without disturbing the golden dreams. Far into the night, when all is still, and the light burns low, a stir is heard in the crib, and a sweet voice breaks plaintively on the air—"Now I lay me down to sleep"—the little lamb remembered that she had forgotten to pray; she had been taught to ask that God would take care of her while she slept; she finished her prayer, and turned upon her pillow, and in a moment was roaming again in fairy-land. Does it not remind us of Christ's word—"I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven"? Is there not such a thing as a child's faith, as pure and real as the faith of Abraham or of Paul?

These are the stages of the development of a child's nature, religiously. They are to have their place in the child's life slowly, surely, hopefully, until—until—listen, and mark it well—until that hour of wonderful, conscious individuality comes, comes as the child never

knew it before—comes gently, as it ought to come, if it has its scriptural way, yet comes distinctly and critically, when the child, nurtured in the chastening and admonition of the Lord, the heart already long turned, the mind fully enlightened on the facts, precepts, promises of the Gospel, deliberately and responsibly for itself, in that dawn of moral individuality, confesses Christ and is baptized. And the child's baptism then will have the seasonableness and beautiful meaning of the ordinance in Apostolic doctrine. Not that there has been no salvation of the child all along. Nay, the child has been included in the redemption in Christ all along. Every lesson of morals, every note of the Bible, every truth of God and duty and immortality, has been taught the child in the light of the redemption in Christ in which the child is included. "One died for all, therefore all died," teaches Paul; and little children were embraced potentially in the Saviour's death; and the good of that sacrifice is theirs verily, which they are to learn and know as they learn and know truth and right every day, every hour, in the first lessons of obedience to parents, in every lesson of conscience and character, with each growing year. Their baptism then, in intelligence and faith, early in life, will really and beautifully represent their salvation, will really and helpfully confirm their salvation, will really and blessedly associate their salvation with the salvation of others, will really and significantly consummate their salvation, in the knowledge of whose reality and blessing the children have been growing all along.

The whole truth of God's Word on the conversion of children avoids both extremes—the unscriptural prac-

tice of baptizing them without any intelligence or faith on their part, and the unscriptural habit of allowing them to grow up without any expectancy of real spiritual influences upon them for good until they encounter a horror of conviction and a spasm of conversion. It clearly speaks both obligation and encouragement to fathers and mothers, leading them to hope that as the child, embosomed in the love of the family, living in an atmosphere of prayer, learns all moral truths and duties line upon line in the light of the redemption in Christ, familiarized with the story of the Messiah of prophecy, the Babe of Bethlehem, the Boy in the Temple, the Sufferer on the Cross, the Risen Lord, it will surely grow to an intelligent, personally responsible confession of Christ in the publicity of the congregation, according to Apostolic practice. Is not this the truth, and the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, of that luminous Scripture of childhood—the word of Paul to Timothy?—"But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them: and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

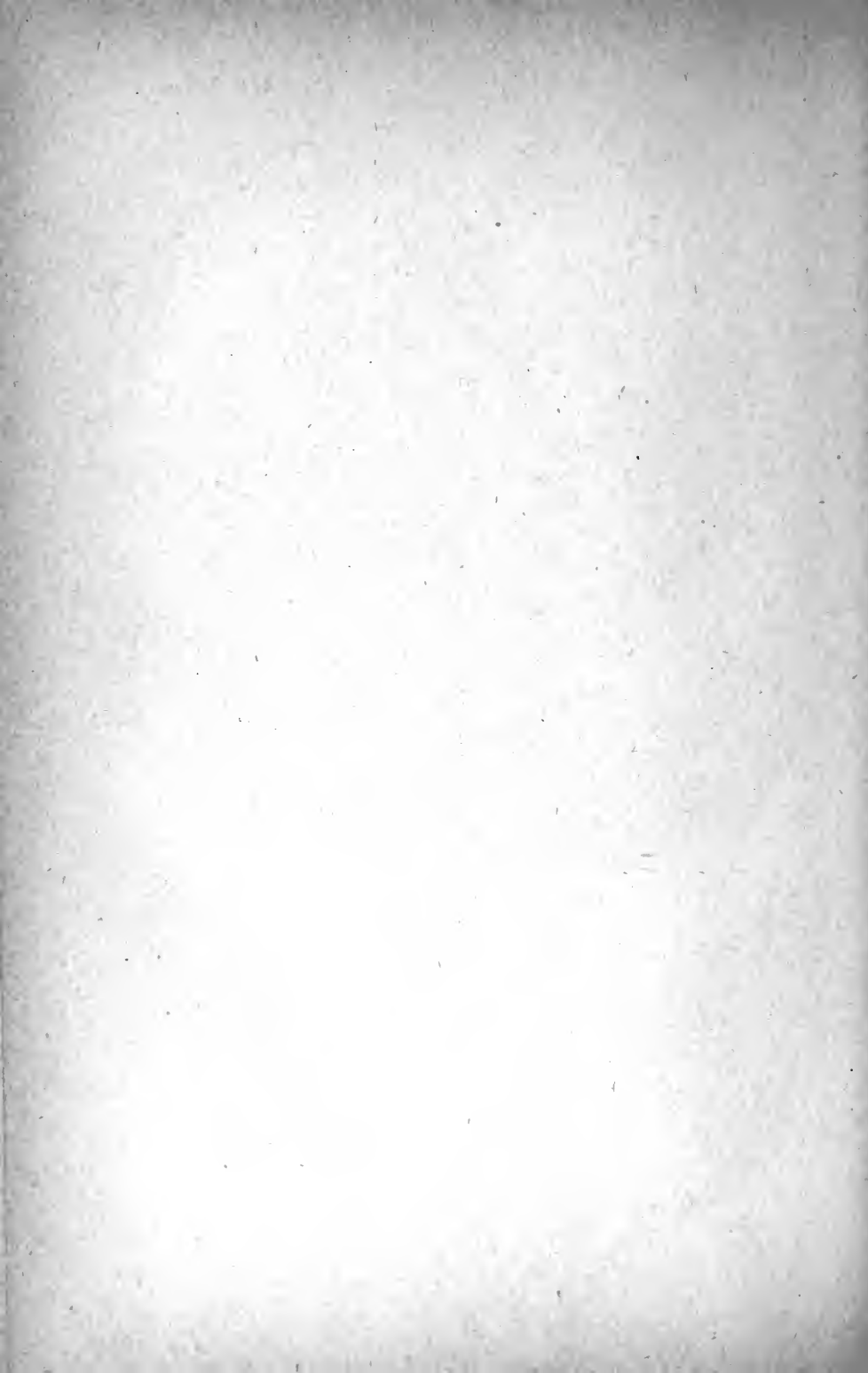
How stands the matter with us parents, and with the children present, to-night? Have I taught the truth? Does it cheer us, rebuke us, exhort us? It is something for every father and mother to think upon, whether the children, as they grow up, are growing in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Are they gradually, surely, yet critically, coming to the sense of individual responsibility under the Gospel? It is not a question merely of age. There is a

fascination about the twelfth year in the realization of such obligation. We have Bible light for the fact; and it has been true a thousand times over in the lives of young people nowadays. But that hour of distinct personal conviction, persuasion, the readiness to confess Christ publicly, as Timothy did, in the sight of many witnesses, may dawn earlier. Look for it. Pray for it. Encourage it. Guide it. From the pulpit, as you fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, sit together, I want to take up the Old Testament note, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth;" and as parents long to see their children make the distinct, public avowal of loyalty to Christ, I want to exhort the children, out of the faith of their hearts, to confess the good confession and to be baptized. There be those of you that are more than old enough to take this step. You know your duty. You have felt its pressure on your conscience more than once. It has become a distinctly individual crisis with you. You do feel that it is the turning point of your life, and that all the light and privileges of your childhood are centering on this hour, as you obey or disobey Christ in the appointments of His Gospel. I beg you, one and all, as you realize your individual duty to Christ along with that deep, individual sense of your need of Him as Saviour, that you hesitate not one day, but courageously arise and confess Him with the mouth. Tell me, have you not learned of Him? Have you not been taught His truth from babyhood? Does not His Word dwell in you, many a sweet Scripture that you memorized at your mother's knee, or heard from the lips of your faithful teacher in the Sunday-school? He is no stranger to you, is He? Have

you not prayed always in His name? Have you not always loved Him, and does not your heart burn with this love now as you behold how much He is to you, how much He has done for you, and what confession and obedience He now calls for on your part? Is not this the glad moment of your life when, in the crisis of individual conviction, feeling your own need and feeling your own responsibility, in the light of the Gospel, you become wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus?

SERMON VIII.

THE PENITENT ROBBER.



VIII.

THE PENITENT ROBBER.

"And he said, Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom. And he said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."—*Luke xxiii. 42, 43.*

The story of the salvation of "the thief on the cross" will always excite in us a deep, deep interest. It is a reasonable interest. It is a healthy interest. Why should it not be? We see unmistakably an instance of death-bed repentance. A man guilty of crime, condemned, crucified, turns to God in the hour and article of death, and begs for mercy. Let us receive the story, and read it, in the spirit and purpose of its place in the Gospel narrative. We ought not straightway to pervert it into a battle-ground of theological debate, and lose sight of its soft light amid the smoke of controversy. It is a Scripture that may be wrested damagingly to sinners. Sure enough. But it was certainly written for the comfort and hope of humanity. Can you think of a different reason why it should be recorded? Is it not meant to magnify the mercy of God? Does it not exhibit His exceeding grace toward men in the Son of His love? Do we not see the heart of Christ opened from its deepest depths, to shelter guilty sinners from the wrath to come?

Consider the very fact that this story of death-bed conversion is found only in the narrative of Luke—in

Luke's Gospel, so felicitously called "the Gospel of humanity." It is very like Luke's style of gathering and reporting the incidents of the Saviour's life. He gives much not found in Matthew, or Mark, or John ; and his characteristic narratives are soft and sweet with the pathos of humanity and the tender mercies of the Son of Man. It is Luke alone who tells of the lowly birth of Jesus, and of the bright scene of the boy Jesus in the temple ; who records the tears and kisses of the outcast woman, as she knelt at the feet of Jesus in the Pharisee's house ; who gives the story of the lost sheep, and the lost piece of money, and the prodigal son ; who sets forth the parable of the good Samaritan, and narrates the radical repentance of the publican Zaccheus. And in Luke's Gospel, the Gospel of humanity, in Luke's Gospel only, we have the precious fact of a sinner's conversion, as he died in the agonies of crucifixion. Let us hold to the heart of the story—without controversy, and without perversion. The spirit and power of such a Gospel—that is what we want ; so gracious, so pitiful, so saving. We desire to understand it in its positive lights, every line of it, every word of it, every throb of it ; and surely if we drink in the full measure of hope there revealed, we shall be none the less prepared for lessons of warning. If, in this salvation of a criminal at the dying hour, in the very presence of Christ, who suffers with him, we feel the warm heart of God in His love for the world, perhaps if the fact strikes us and thrills us through and through with all its truth and power, it may solemnize us, and cause us to see, with mingled gratitude and awe, that, before such a scene, crime—the pains of death—an outcry for mercy—from a prison to Paradise

—the guilt and tears of a poor, undone sinner, and the love and promise of a Saviour, no one, indeed, need to despair, but—no one shall dare to presume.

Who is this criminal? What is his crime? What has brought him to this ignominious and painful death? According to the old version, he was a *thief*; and so the old hymn runs, "The dying thief." But the Revised Version is more accurate. Not a thief, but a *robber*. Henceforth, if we would read the Scriptures aright, we must say, "and with him they crucify two robbers; one on his right hand, and one on his left." There is no hair-splitting of words in the change. A thief is a coward, who does his naughty work by stealth, and by petty practices, and tries meanwhile to evade the law. A robber is bold, exhibits a certain open-handed courage, the courage of desperate wickedness though it be, as he defiantly breaks the law.

It was two robbers between whom the Saviour was crucified. They were Jews; and it was their nationality that had been the occasion of their crime. They had become a class in that day, becoming so as they chafed under the bondage of the Roman yoke, heated by patriotic fire, burning to deliver Israel from oppression, and at last driven to some insurrection that made them henceforth outlaws, when they would flee to mountain fastnesses, and live by murder and robbery. Sometimes the robber was "a notable prisoner," as Barabbas; and the Jews deemed it a favor, if some Pilate or Felix, at the Passover feast, would release one of these patriotic ringleaders. Two of these brigands there were, who, no doubt, like Barabbas, "for insurrection and murder had been cast into prison." Barab-

bas went forth free ; but Jesus was led out, to be crucified—the Son of God on his way to death, heading a strange procession, Simon of Cyrene bearing the cross after the weary Saviour, followed by a great multitude of the people, and of women in tears and lamentations, while close to Him, bearing their own crosses, were “two others, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.”

The Saviour of the world, obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross, and two robbers dying with Him, one on the right hand, the other on the left, one of these repenting at the door of death—this is the scene and the study before us. There are heights and depths about it that we might not suspect, if we did not look it carefully over. The time was short, only a few hours ; but time may bring its crisis, in which a man's life may be filled with the significance of eternity. That one hour is as threescore and ten years, and threescore and ten years as one hour. What a man then sees, hears, knows and feels, crowds his whole life together, and shows him, in the electric light of truth, what he is, and what he ought to be. All the past stands out uncovered in the glare of conscience, and what the man has been doing, and what he has made of himself by his deeds, the totality of his habits and character, will now decidedly and decisively affect his destiny. It will make all the difference imaginable whether he is hardened in heart or not. The day will declare what he is in feeling, and to no person more unmistakably than to himself. He is bound to act himself out completely in this last scene of the drama of life. It is not a whim whether or not a wicked man will repent on his death-bed. It is not accidental one

way or the other. It is something more than a slavish dread of Hell. It is something more than a selfish desire of Heaven. The reality of life, the realness of that man's life, its inmost heart, all that makes him responsible before the judgment of God, will be revealed in a noontide light without a cloud.

It was such a crisis for those two robbers on the cross. Let us remember there were two of them—one of them penitent, the other impenitent. For we must properly follow Luke's record as both full and exact. The statement of Matthew and of Mark, that both of the robbers reproached Jesus, we must receive in the light of a free literary classification, where neither of the writers, as Luke, had any purpose of discrimination in narrating the repentance of one of the malefactors. In Luke's narrative, alone giving the repentance of one of them, giving it fully and minutely, we see revealed the inmost heart of the poor robber; we see a repentance not whimsical, not accidental, not sentimental, but thoughtful and strong and humble and prayerful beyond a doubt. All this we want to get before us, that we may magnify the mercy of God, while we verily show how dangerous is any presumption on the sinner's part.

Five significant facts shine out in the penitent robber's speech. They show how intelligent and whole-hearted his repentance was.

1. He had a wholesome fear of God. "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, Art thou the Christ? save thyself and us. But the other answered, and rebuking him said, Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" Mark the railing words, as they broke

forth out of a railing heart. It is a thoroughly selfish speech of an immoral man, afraid to die. All the use he has for a Christ is to help himself to get down from that torturous cross, and go free. But mark the answer of the comrade—a rebuke, indeed, not a wild and fierce rebuke, but a rebuke from a dying man, who is thinking about his condition, and whose heart is astir with soft wonderings as he looked upon the face of the Sufferer next to him. “Dost thou not even fear God?” Here is faith in God. Of course. The robber was a Jew. That faith had not been born in a day. The cross had not made him a believer since he had been nailed to it. He had not been driven to acknowledge Deity under the shadow of death. That faith was a life-long faith. It was one of the sweet flowers that grew in the heart of every Jewish boy. The robber could look back and remember when he went to the synagogue in his native town, and came up to the temple for worship, or stood at some mother’s or grandmother’s knee, and heard the law, the psalms, and the prophets. Criminal that he had become in manhood’s prime, an outlaw now condemned and dying, he was no atheist, no infidel; he said neither in his head nor in his heart, There is no God; he believed that God is; and he feared God. “Dost thou not even fear God?” That little word, *even*. It was time for one that believed there is a God, to fear Him. Death was at hand; judgment was near; ought not all this to solemnize one, and cause one humbly and wisely to fear? The dying malefactor had a living faith, with its healthful fear, as he acknowledged God, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of the proph-

ets, the God of his fathers, his own God, the righteous Judge of all the earth.

2. He had a true sympathy with a fellow-man. There it was, wrapped up warmly in the same heart that feared God. "Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" God—himself—a fellow-man, and both in a like condition—"the same condemnation"—all this rolled in upon the dying robber, and while his faith looked toward God, his heart beat in sympathy with those that suffered by him. There could not have been in a man a surer fact of a broken and a contrite heart. We judge a man human, as long as his feeling can be touched and softened by the sight of the woes and pains of mortals. We say he is not all wicked when he can weep with those that weep, and speak out quickly his sympathy with suffering fellow-men, and sometimes even strangely dare a noble self-sacrifice that another may be spared. Those tender sentiments in human nature are of God. They have survived the inroads of sin, nestling deep down in divine depths of the heart; and it is a wonder and a glory how now and then they spring up in power, and rise in winged words of poetry or in the sublimer poetry of deeds, and help to keep humanity from devilish despair. "I am a man, and I count nothing human to be alien from me," sang one of the Roman bards. And sang another, speaking the heart of a heathen queen to shipwrecked pilgrims: "Not unacquainted with grief, I learn to succor those that suffer." Thank God for any tenderness of heart that you have. Rejoice if the tear of sympathy easily starts in view of a fellow's sorrow. The beginnings of conversion may be right there in healthy, humane sen-

timents. It may be the sign that the heart is not hardened—"past feeling," as Paul once terribly describes it. One of the malefactors was hardened. He did nothing but taunt and rail. He had no fear of God before his eyes. He had no tears to shed for a fellow-sufferer. The other malefactor—do we not now begin to see aright the real condition of his soul? Under the torture of nails, amid quivering agonies of body, thirsting and dying, the soul is alive—alive in faith and in love. He looks up to God. He looks upon a fellow-man. He fears the Judge of all the earth. He feels sincerely with the silent Sufferer by his side. Religion is burning within him—humility before God, love toward a fellow-man.

3. He made an honest, explicit, unqualified confession of his guilt. Men plainly judge themselves by the manner in which they acknowledge their sins and transgressions. They are often self-deceived in it. They acknowledge their general sinfulness, but they do not admit their specific faults. Or if they are convinced that this or that wrong deed can not be denied, they try to excuse it or to palliate it. And the severest judgment of our shallow confessions of our sins, is that just not denying them seems to sum up our whole duty, and that is the end of the matter. We forget the consequences of sin. These are to be heard from, and not to be silenced. Our whole duty is not only to confess our sins, but to be prepared for whatever penalties or chastisements inevitably follow. The sin of drunkenness, long indulged, even while you repent of it, and are forgiven of God, you may expect to be humbled very greatly as often, in the flame of your appetite and the dread-

ful weakness of your nerves, you have to watch and pray against another fall. Your break-down in integrity of character, exposed, confessed, even forgiven, will impose on you years of distrust by many of your business associates, as penitently and honestly you endeavor to establish a good name once more. And the secret sins, which the world never heard of, which you have confessed to God and which you bravely strive against now, the poison of them is still in your blood, and the shame of them haunts your memory, and keeps you strangely humble in your present life of purity and love.

Now look at this confession of the penitent robber. Is it not plain, sincere, straightforward, unqualified, downright and unreservedly humble? He was a criminal before God and man. He had been an outlaw. He had robbed, and probably murdered, his fellow-men. But he is arrested, tried, convicted, crucified; and, so far from denying his crime, he not only admits that, but acknowledges the righteousness of his condemnation. "And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds." What a difference between the two malefactors! One of them hardened, past feeling, chafing under punishment, a railing wretch; the other, bowing to the penalty of the law, confessing his guilt in the justice of the punishment, touched in heart by the agony of another, humbly fearing God! It was a wonderful depth in the penitence of the robber that, feeling his guilt, and an awful spectacle for men in his condemnation, he could speak aloud: "I receive the due reward of my deeds."

4. He appreciated and confessed the innocence of Jesus. It was no surmise on his part, we may be sure.

It was not a successful guess on general principles, hastily conceived as he looked at the Sufferer, and marked the air of beautiful meekness and resignation. The confession must have arisen from what he knew before of Jesus, as well as what he saw there of the faultless spirit and perfect character. He must have heard of the great Teacher, the Wonder-worker, who went about doing good, and preaching the kingdom of God. It is no strain of the imagination to think that the poor malefactor may have seen the Son of Man, and have been astonished at the authoritative teaching and the lovable life. There is already in the robber's heart something other than just an indifferent admission that the prisoner between himself and the fellow-malefactor did not deserve such a fate. It was because his own guilt was piercing his conscience that he saw all the more plainly how innocent Jesus was; and it was because, hearing or knowing of Jesus before, and also now seeing the marvelous patience and catching the wonderful words of forgiving love and unselfish thoughtfulness, his heart was melting in penitence and tears, that he could speak in a positive and sympathetic voice, "This man hath done nothing amiss." For,

5. His penitence, genuine, intelligent, growing deeper and fuller in those hours of agony, in the sight and hearing of the Lamb of God, now became a direct, truth-lit prayer. "And he said, Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." Let us appreciate the spirit of this prayer, and do it justice. A dying man is praying. He has been a wicked man—an outlaw, a robber, probably a murderer. He is dying in the shame and torture of crucifixion. The time is short. Eternity is near. There is a death-bed cry for

mercy. It breaks from lips unused to prayer. But, mark! it is not a dark, ignorant, selfish prayer—the prayer of a self-deceived man who imagines that he is repenting of his life-long sins. A robber, a condemned criminal, in the hour and article of death, prays for mercy. It was a quivering prayer, bursting forth from a trembling heart and parched lips. But in it there was the fear of God, the faith of childhood alive once more. In it there was humane feeling toward a fellow-man. In it there was the sincere conviction of a guilty career, an honest, frank confession of crime, an humble acknowledgement of the justice of condemnation and crucifixion. In it there was the tender eye that saw the innocence of one of his companions in judgment—saw it, too, in the wide light of loveliness in death, and of doctrine and deed in life, and of a revelation of the God of Israel amid it all. That prayer, so penitent, so pathetic, the helpless cry of a dying criminal, is more intelligent than perhaps we have been in the habit of thinking. He prays: “Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom.” Not “comest *into* thy kingdom,” as we read in the old version, but as in the Revised Version, “when thou comest *in* thy kingdom.” The robber was a Jew, and he knew the Scriptures. He had been taught of the Messiah to come, and, like every Jew, he looked for the kingdom of God: he looked for the appearance of the Messiah in His kingdom. It was not a perfect faith—perfect in knowledge; it needed to be corrected, purified, enlarged, freed from certain sensuous elements, made more spiritual. But it was a faith perfect in trust, as it laid hold of the person of Jesus, and saw in Him the Messiah of God. The robber knew not the times and

seasons. He could not, except in a far-off way, appreciate the character of the coming kingdom. But there was the Messiah, he was sure, the Christ of God; and only the blessed Lord Himself could measure the penitence, the hunger, the outstretched faith, the tearful, heart-breaking cry of that prayer: "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom."

The prayer was heard. A man repenting in the agony of death was saved. The mercy of God was again illustriously magnified, according to this Gospel of humanity. The redemption that could find the praying publican, and the woman that was a sinner, and the prodigal son, and the lost sheep, finds another poor, undone sinner repenting while he was dying; and the lips of mercy spoke the exquisite promise, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." The heart of the dying Jew knew enough what it meant. There was forgiveness for him. The balm of peace began to descend on his soul. He was no longer a guilty sinner, but a child of God. He was dying with the very Messiah, and that day, when it was all over, they should meet one another again in Paradise. It should be life again, free from sin, without pains or fears, a sweet and perfect rest, in company with Jesus, in the Garden of God.

Let me ask with you eagerly, was not the lesson written also for us? Indeed it was. And I want to ask searchingly, have we ever opened our hearts fully to the shining Heaven of mercy in the story? We do despite to the spirit of this Scripture when we lose sight of the heart of love so radiant and warm in it, and concern ourselves just with some exegetical questions or some theological puzzles suggested by the

text, or perhaps prompted by our own cold speculations and still colder natures. I know of no soft, tender, pathetic Scripture, in which the philanthropy of God so luminously appears, that has been so clouded and blackened in distrustful expositions and stormy debates. One pulpiteer will rule it out for all lessons of light and mercy to-day because the event occurred before the Day of Pentecost of Acts ii. Another will argue that the robber's going to Paradise does not necessarily prove that he was saved, after all. A third will hold up the story to settle that a sinner has nothing to do, must be helplessly passive, as God saves him. "I'd like to know what a thief could do, nailed to a cross, but just believe?" so the foolish question is ignorantly asked by a popular evangelist, who needs to understand the first principles of the Gospel of Christ.

It is all wrong, this way of reading and using the wonderful narrative. We are not to start with cold cautions about perverting it, and surely not with clumsy efforts of explaining it away, nor mechanical twists of incidental logic concerning it, until with hard intellects and still harder hearts we are deaf to the sad cry of the poor robber, and hear not the music of a Redeemer's voice of mercy and love. Those two facts—that an undone sinner, dying in agony, like a bruised reed, like smoking flax, piteously cried for help, and that the strong Saviour of the world, suffering with him, yet able to save, went before him into Paradise, and opened the way for him to come, too—we want to read this sweet story of old, and read it, and read it, until we feel like saying, in gratitude and tears, "Do not our hearts burn within us, as He speaks to us in His Word?"

Yes; tears and gratitude first, as we magnify the exceeding mercy of God. And then I am sure, if the story rightly affects us in this way, we can but nobly feel that it is also a Scripture for this day, and that we shall be overjoyed, and more and more filled with praise, if we see it proving itself a Gospel for some sinner again lying at death's door. Why should we not believe in such a Gospel of mercy following a guilty man down to the low dark verge of life? It is human. It is scriptural. It is divine. Let sinners have every opportunity of salvation. Do not limit the mercy of God; do not forestall His judgment. Were you ever called, rather first of your own accord did you ever go to the bedside of a dying fellow-man, or to the prison-cell of some man doomed to die? And then and there did you see the soul awaking in its guilt, and in its hunger? Did you mark the wondering, the piteous, look of the eye? Was your humanity touched through and through by the forlornness of the poor sufferer? And while you both felt the overshadowing, dread reality of another world, was your own heart completely melted within you, as a voice spoke sadly and brokenly, "Pray for me"? Tell me—tell me, did you feel bound then by a mechanical system of theology? Did you stop to debate with an imaginary opponent over the grace of God? Did not the Gospel of humanity rise upon you in a larger light and a clearer, more beautiful meaning? Oh! how sweet and how reasonable it was then to think of the lost sheep, and the shepherd searching for it; and of the prodigal son, and the Father waiting for the poor child to come to himself and to come back home; and of the penitent robber, and the

merciful Saviour breathing the words of peace and hope ! By all this Gospel of humanity, the Gospel of divine long-suffering and mercy, the Gospel of God, who does not wish that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, by the Gospel of a dying and a rising and ever-living Saviour, by the Gospel of Apostolic preaching, the Gospel of easy precept and luminous promise—let us be assured that it is possible for a sinner to turn at death's door, then and there to believe on Christ, to repent of his sins, to confess the Saviour, to be baptized, and to receive the salvation of his soul.

I will not stop for any debate whether such a penitent man, repenting under the shadow of death, dying possibly without baptism, will be saved or not. This I know, and this you know, that the Word of God teaches, as the old creed confesses, "one baptism for the remission of sins." The Gospel commands penitent believers to be baptized unto the remission of sins. The ordinance of baptism is taught thus unmistakably in the Apostolic ministry, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, on and after that grand inaugural Day of Pentecost that ushered in the full and authoritative Gospel of Christ's death and resurrection. But such a baptism was taught before that central day. Such were the precept and purpose of John's baptism, "the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins," the counsel of God that came to every Jew, whether publican or Pharisee, whether robber or Sadducee. Nay, Jesus made and baptized disciples (although Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples). The duty of baptism, involving repentance and remission of sins, had been not a whit less obligatory upon the wicked robber than

it is upon the sinner or criminal of to-day. And thank God, when we concern ourselves about it in the right way, when we feel fully this Gospel of humanity, and carry it to the patient on the sick bed, or to the doomed prisoner in his cell, and trust in its power to convict and convert, we somehow find it wonderfully easy, no distraction at all, no trouble, when we exercise sanctified common sense, to bring the decent and convenient portable baptistery, and to baptize the penitent believer "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

This is the whole, reasonable truth upon the matter. Christian baptism, a part of the Gospel of the grace of God, is not a superstitious rite. It is not a fetich, to be appeased by the devotion of the worshiper. It is not a gauntlet to be run amid threats and dangers. It is an appointment of God's mercy and grace; and there the salvation of the penitent believer is really and beautifully represented, there really and helpfully confirmed, there really and blessedly associated with the salvation of others, there really and significantly consummated in the obedience of faith whose principle and whose process is eternal life. This is why the obedience of faith in the ordinance has brought its days or hours of peace to the sick bed, when the poor sufferer has become very weak in body, scarcely able to arise, nay, requiring to be tenderly lifted, and gently buried with Christ in baptism. Not because of any infection of magic nor charm of mechanics in the institution—one extreme; nor surely because it is a mere rite of bald rationalism, without any blessing of redemption in it—the other extreme—have sick, dying men been baptized, and should be baptized. Where it is not prac-

licable, a criminal nailed to the cross, an invalid too far gone to survive the act (how seldom that will be !), a prodigal son suddenly turning in some fatal casualty where is no opportunity for such obedience, then assuredly, if there be tears, penitence, the strong cry for deliverance, the humility of faith, we trust the Word of truth—"If the readiness is there, it is acceptable according as a man hath, not according as he hath not ;" and in that penitent heart of living faith assuredly is present the salvation of God. I exhort, let us not read the story of the penitent robber, straightway to frame a theological dictum that baptism has no place nor reason in the Gospel of salvation. I do not see how any one can say that, with the plain teaching of the Scriptures concerning "the obedience of faith," in which is the process of salvation, where baptism, in Apostolic doctrine, speaks its seasonable commandment, and promises a spiritual blessing. But let us not make baptism a necessity that God's Word does not. I do not see how any one can think and teach in that way, if he feels the throb of that scene at Calvary, and believes that it is a Gospel of humanity for all ages.

Always, always, we are to feel thus in reading or preaching the story of the penitent robber. We want to know the heart of it first. We want to appreciate, fully and gratefully, the reason why Luke narrated this touching fact. The good of it, the positive good for us, for sinners to-day, what lesson of God's love and mercy—let us see all this, in its own warm, sweet light ; and surely in such a way we shall be all the better prepared to hear the undertones of warning that the Gospel may also necessarily sound. It is the very way to make you see, O sinner ! that you dare

not idly presume on your salvation while putting it off till death approaches.

Are you really, secretly in your heart, presuming on God's mercy as a last resort? Do you think it a certain fact whose blessing you will grasp as you hurry to the grave? Are you sure of that? Are you so sure of yourself? Suppose that death comes suddenly, unexpectedly, terribly—what then? It is very possible. You may drop dead on the street some day, without a moment's warning—no time for prayer, no time for repentance. You may be hurled headlong to destruction in some railroad wreck. You may die somewhere, somehow, without a moment's warning, and open your eyes in Hades, with the torment of your sins on your soul. Do you want to run that risk? Do you think it safe to dare death in that way, and to conclude that it will all be right beyond the grave anyhow? Be careful. The story of the penitent robber does not justify that.

Do you take it for granted that you will be sick long enough to make your peace with God before you die? What right have you to suppose that? May be your sickness will be very short—three days, one day, between the rising and the setting sun, between night-fall and morning. It may be so deceptive that you think that you will surely get well; you are disturbed with no fears of dying; it does not occur to you to repent and pray for mercy. Men, a thousand times, have been ill this way; and in twenty-four hours, to the astonishment of everybody, there is a funeral march to the city of the dead. Even if you linger on the sick-bed, are you sure of repentance? What about opiates, which benumb the senses or cloud the brain? Will

you hear the Gospel then, and intelligently repent and believe?

Nay, nay; there is a greater danger still. There is still a more fearful risk. In mortal illness, as you think, the dews of death on your forehead, with a sound mind, and tears in your eyes, and prayer after prayer on your lips, you may feel that you are a penitent man, and that you accept the salvation of God—and then what? Listen! Perhaps I am describing the experience of some sinner here to-night. Why, you did not die—to your own surprise you did not die! You arose from that sick-bed, which even the wise physician thought would be your death-bed; and, alas! you saw for yourself that your repentance was not genuine, and you did not care. You did not die: you lived on; but you did not repent, nor change your life for the better. You went on in disobedience, and you have not repented yet. Your sick-bed repentance was not real. You were self-deceived. You were selfishly dreading death and Hell. You were not humbly fearing God, and hating your own sins, hungry for pardon and peace. If you had died, and gone on into the other world, the lightning flash of God's judgment would have showed you to yourself, how blind and mistaken you were. You would have gone on, and entered there just what you continued to be here after you got on your feet again.

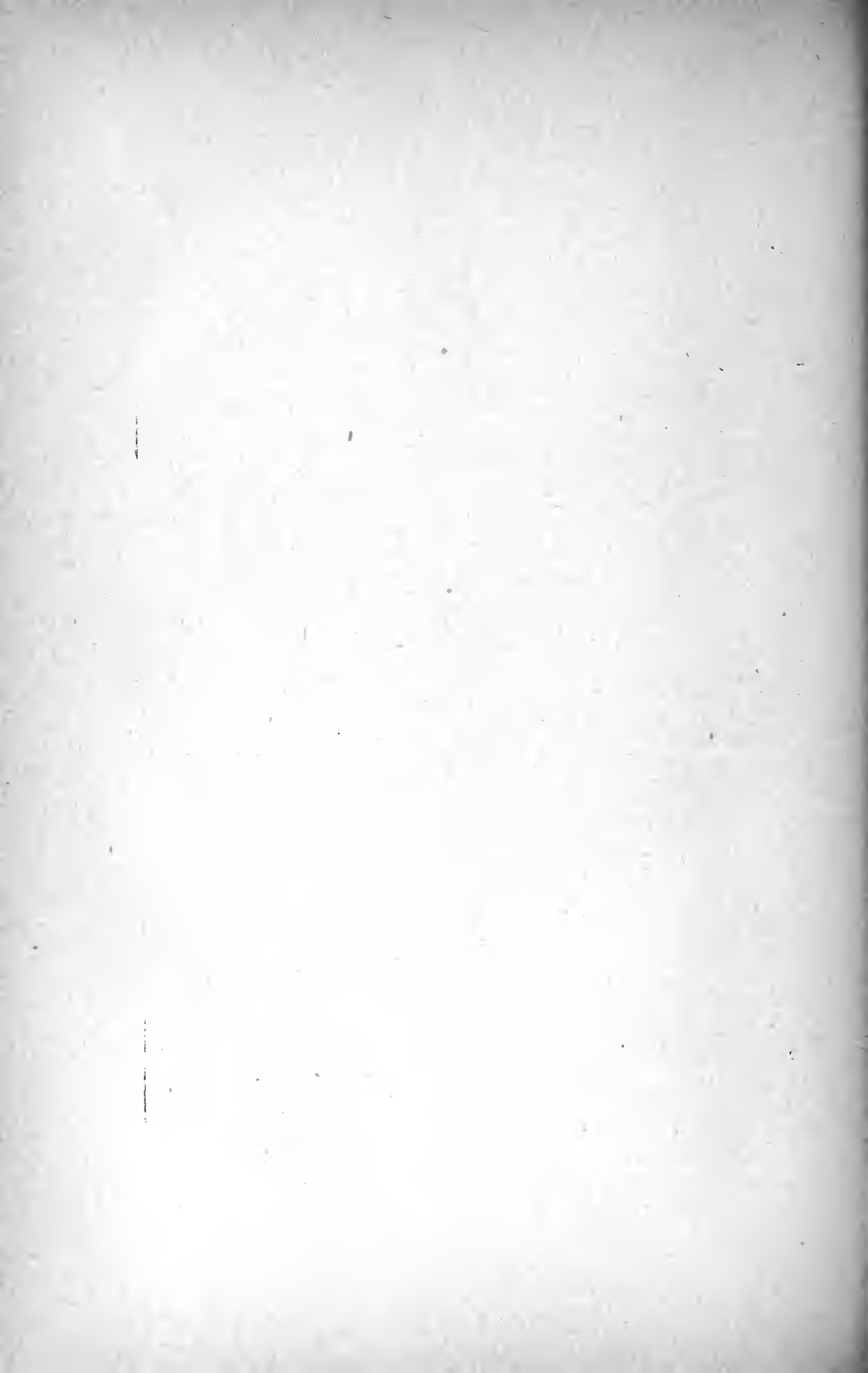
And still there is another danger, the most terrible of all. You may at last lie dying, in full possession of your senses, with mind clear and unclouded, and die in perfect indifference to death and God and judgment. Men sometimes go in that way. They have no concern in their unbelief. They simply do not care for what is

beyond the grave. They are hardened—hardened! The hardness not of blasphemy, but the hardness of indifference! No sign of death-bed repentance, but the awful reality of death-bed impenitence!

Oh! it was a vision of mercy over that torturous death-bed of the robber. It promises not to break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. It opens the gates of glory to every poor, storm-beaten sinner, who comes empty-handed, hungry-hearted, bringing nothing but his penitence and his tears, and crying out for salvation. There can be no trifling with such love. It makes your responsibility all the surer, all the heavier, as you hear this Gospel of humanity in health of body and mind, in the golden privilege of the present hour. Do not presume. Do not delay. Do not assure yourself of time to repent. Do not assure yourself of disposition to repent. Be not self-deceived. Harden not your heart. Behold, now is the acceptable time! now is the day of salvation!

SERMON IX.

GLORIFYING GOD IN THE
NAME CHRISTIAN.



IX.

GLORIFYING GOD IN THE NAME CHRISTIAN.

"But if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name."—*1. Pet. iv. 16.*

The Revised Version makes more explicit and more vivid this heartfelt note of the Apostle. "Let him glorify God *in this behalf*," was the old reading. But the new text is better—"Let him glorify God *in this name*." It is not only the fact of the Christian's suffering that may make for glory, but it is because he suffers as a Christian. Professing himself a Christian, known as a Christian, drawing the fire of persecution as a Christian, the name itself the object of hostility and obloquy, he is still not to be ashamed of the name. Rather, the suffering is to be the highway to triumph. When martyrdom began, when his life began to be poured out as an offering, then should begin also the song of the Lord in the sublime victory of faith. "Let him glorify God in this name"! The humble disciple stands in the arena, amid the curious gaze of excited, breathless thousands—stands there ready to suffer and to die for the name of the Lord Jesus. The hungry lions are held in leash, eager to spring upon their prey. Again and again is life promised him, if only he will deny that he is a Christian; but again and again the voice is unfalteringly heard, borne over the vast still-

ness of the throng—"I am a Christian." It is the oft-seen picture of the blood of the martyrs becoming the seed of the Church. Myriads of them, fathers, mothers, young men, maidens, as they hear the wild cry, "To the lions!" steadily confess, and deny not. They bear witness in the tragic climax of their faith. Suffering, dying, the light of eternal life falling along the path of martyrdom, they glorify God in the name Christian.

The exhortation is indeed thus emphatic. It appealed to a fact; it interpreted an experience. To wear the name Christian, and to suffer and die for it, is to glorify God. But, as we may rightly ask, Why is it that the name occurs so infrequently in the Word of God? It is not a constant name of actual use in Apostolic history, as we read that history. It does not stand out time after time in the Acts of the Apostles, where we read of the planting and training of churches. It does not occupy place after place distinctly, purposely, in the progress of Christian doctrine, whether in Paul's first letter or John's last epistle. It is not current coin in the meetings and greetings of believers. Other names, many of them, are used, and used many a time, not only each one distinctly appropriate, but occurring so often in such a connection, and with such a purpose, that their very occurrence is an impressive lesson of the fullness and richness of the life worthy of the Gospel. There they are, sprinkled thickly on the New Testament pages—"disciples," and "brethren," and "saints;" or "those of the Way," "the elect," "the faithful." These are designations, specific and pointed in their recurrence, not to call up dozens of other terms and phrases that are more freely and fluidly used in luminous truths of Divine doctrine and

spiritual experience. If, as is true, all of these names have, one by one, their appropriate signification, each one glowing with light and life, much more the name Christian. If disciple is used because it so modestly means a learner; if, as we read of brethren, we know the time of humanity had come for men, on the large scale, to deny themselves and even to lay down their lives for one another, because the Son of God had died for them all; if "God's husbandry" reveals the loving and patient hand of God in human lives; if "the body of Christ" represents how closely His people are joined together with one another, and all closely together with Him—I repeat, each term, each phrase, indeed glowing with light and life, still, above them all, comprehending them all, shining in a glory that envelops all the rest, is the unitedly scriptural and catholic name CHRISTIAN.

Three times, and three times only, the name occurs in the New Testament. The way it occurs, where used and how used, makes plain why we find it so few times. But in these three Scriptures there is the secret of the glory of the name Christian. It is not for nothing that it appears to stand in the background in the New Testament. In that fact, fairly weighed and understood, we shall see the reason why it shines conspicuously in the foreground of the progress of the Gospel to-day. Evidently not at all heard in the first days of the churches of Judea, evidently not current in Paul's preaching nor in Paul's practice amid his wide missions to the Gentiles, nowhere a constant note of Apostolic doctrine or writing, but a single note of one Apostle's pen, in that one time of the three times of its occurrence it reveals itself in its origin, its history, its glory.

There is the authority of an Apostle for us to glorify God in the name Christian; and his authority is writ large in the origin, the history, the glory of the name. Let us make the name a study to-night in this order—its *origin*, its *history*, its *glory*.

1. *Its origin.* It was first heard in Antioch. Ten years had gone by since the beginning in Jerusalem. The Gospel had proved itself the power of God unto salvation to the Jew first; now it was saving also the Greek. Its universality was having a wide and conspicuous demonstration. There could have been no choicer place for the Gospel to the Gentiles than the city of Antioch. The time was ripe; the place was ready. It was a city, indeed, of this world. It stood third after Rome; only Alexandria was ahead. Beautiful in situation along a broad-flowing river, encircled by massive walls, abounding in wealth, adorned by art, with sunny gardens and shady groves, it held a population of half a million, all sorts and conditions of men, Jew, Greek, Roman, Syrian, bondman, freeman. The Gospel came into contact for the first time with humanity in a mass, with rich and poor, with philosopher and slave, here in the populous, the luxurious, the immoral capital city of Syria. Barnabas and Saul busily glean the field so white unto harvest. "Even for a whole year"—"taught much people"—that is the record how they fulfilled their ministry of the Gospel. In such a place, Antioch, the third metropolis of the world; at such a crisis, when Jew and Gentile by the thousands rejoiced together in the salvation of God; in the diligent ministry of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, in the first fruits of his world-wide mission, the name CHRISTIAN first was heard. All these facts of

burning interest, marking a veritable turning point of human history in the origin of a new appellation, we may rightly read between the lines in the classic Scripture—"And it came to pass, that even for a whole year they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people ; and that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

The time of its origin, the place of its origin—where the stream flowed, where it was seen flowing—these are plain enough. But what was the source of the stream? This is no idle question ; it may profitably be asked. Who called those disciples Christians first in Antioch? Was the name of Divine origin, or of human origin? More strictly, did God give it directly, or did man of his own motion propose it? Did Barnabas and Saul pronounce it by inspiration? or did it spring up altogether from the outside?

These have been questions of controversy, serious, sometimes hot, even bitter. The interest of it has centered around the point whether it is right or wrong for the disciples of Christ to wear names that are plainly of human origin, and undeniably sectarian and divisive. Many who affirm that the name Christian is unsectarian and catholic, appeal to this Scripture as a proof-text of the Divine inspiration of the name. Many, on the other hand, who apologize for denominational titles of human origin, affirm that the word Christian itself is of human origin. And so the debate has run, the question poorly stated and as poorly argued on either side, the exegesis of one as lame as the logic of the other, with a barren victory for both. Both, indeed, seem to forget the practical settlement that we have the authority of an inspired Apostle to glorify

God in the name Christian. They lose sight of the fact that, whatever its origin, Divine or human, it is Divinely authorized, it is Divinely endorsed, it is Divinely glorified. This simple, unquestionable fact should be a short, humbling lesson to us who, in preaching against divisive names among the people of God, rightly advocate the scriptural, unsectarian, catholic name Christian. This alone ought to save us from the false appeal to Acts xi. 26, as if it were a proof-text showing, beyond all doubt, that the name was given by inspired teachers of the Word. It is a downright violence of exegesis, unsustained by scholarship, to be making a new translation of the Greek, in order to prove that Barnabas and Saul originated the name. With that kind of interpretation of a text, as Jowett says, "we had as well shut our grammars and lexicons, and draw lots for the sense." And it is just as fanciful to be quoting Isaiah's prophecy about a "new name," and finding the prophecy fulfilled just then and there at Antioch in the name Christian.

The truth is, this Scripture, looked at alone, does not settle the question of the origin of the name one way or the other. What makes the weight of evidence for its origin, is its history; and the history of the name proves very clearly that it was given, not by Barnabas and Saul, but by the outside world in the spirit of reproach. The will of God was none the less in its origin, heard first, though it was, upon the lips of uninspired men. The time may have had its significance, the place may have had its significance; the first pronouncement of the name then and there may truly and duly have its notable, emphatic record by the historian's orderly pen. But each note of it in the

New Testament, and every fact of it in Apostolic history, in Paul's day, in Peter's day, in the old age of John, points to it invariably, impressively, as a word of reproach in the eyes and in the mouths of a hostile, evil world. There is very good reason why Luke himself never in the Book of the Acts calls the disciples Christians; why Paul not once speaks it in salutation nor writes it in narration; why it does not start up again and again in the New Testament Scriptures; why it nowhere is heard in sermon or song, in prayer or praise, among congregations of believers. There is very good reason why it is heard so few times, three times only, and so particularly, so significantly, twice explicitly as a name of reproach in the hostility of the world. The origin of the name, as we shall see, shines in the course of its history, as the history also steadily, sublimely unfolds its secret of noontide glory.

2. *Its history.* The second time of its occurrence is still in the Book of the Acts. It was a long time after its first occurrence, as the history of it appears. It falls from the lips of an enemy of the Cross; and the tone of it is one of contempt and reproach. Paul preaches the Gospel before a royal audience—the prisoner of Jesus Christ in the presence of the kings and rulers of this earth. Agrippa the king and his spouse—the Roman governor Festus—the chief captain, and the principal men of the city—into a dazzling scene of worldly pride and pomp, the bond-servant of the Lord is led, his chain rattling upon his arm. He tells the story of his own conversion, defends his own Apostleship, while preaching the Gospel of the resurrection. Vividly, glowingly, he preaches Christ and Him crucified; pointedly and insistently, with his eye fixed on

the king, he appeals to undoubted prophecies become indubitable facts. "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest," charges the mighty man of God on the fellow-Jew, now visibly affected under the burning truth of the Spirit. There may have been a real stir of conscience, a sense of hunger and duty, with the king; but it was smothered, stifled, under smooth words of mingled compliment and contempt. Not "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," as we have long read in the old version; but, "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian." "A Christian"—"wouldest fain make me a Christian"—it is spoken from the outside, in smiling compliment, in courtly indifference, in a smooth undertone of contempt and reproach. The name is still in travail in the mind and speech of the Church itself. It is not yet doctrinal, practical, a usage, an ensign, a foremost and uppermost, full-formed and clear-cut name in her life and language. Paul's very answer—"I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds"—this very answer, in its beautiful fullness and courtesy, plainly indicates that the name has not yet become a familiar, purposeful name on the lips of the disciples themselves.

All this is borne out, too, in the Scripture which is frequently quoted as referring to the name Christian. "Do not they blaspheme the honorable name by the which ye are called?" is the accusation of the devout James concerning the rich opponents of his poor brethren. But he means not specifically the name Christian, but the name Christ, as the margin of the Revised

Version explains. The Greek is, "the honorable name which was called upon you." It refers to the calling of a name, in the old Hebrew style, over persons, as a sign to whom they belonged. It is like Israel of old, saying, "Let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac." The name Christ was called upon these brethren in their baptism; it signified distinctly, specifically, whose they were, and whom they served. This was the honorable name, the very name of the Christian's Lord, which was blasphemed among Jews and Gentiles, the name which, as the Roman governor Pliny long after this time relates, he caused to be reviled in open court. It all reveals the storm of hostility, reproach, persecution, steadily gathering to be poured upon the name that is above every name, as well as the name only a little lower—the name Christ, and naturally enough, and most significantly, the name Christian. The real history of the name, with its large weighty lesson as a name, in Apostolic days, and long days afterward, is focused in the language of Peter—"If a man suffer as a Christian."

The history of it could not have been otherwise. It meant the closer and closer and closer contact of the Gospel with the world. It signified that the Gospel was making itself felt as a factor in all human life. The individual man had heard the Gospel of his salvation; and myriads of men, one by one, scattered from Galatia to Spain, were going on their way, rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins. Jews, Greeks, Barbarians, Scythians, bondmen, freemen, one man after another, in distinct individuality, enter the kingdom of God. Such individual salvation is the plain and impressive fact of the New Testament—each man giving account of him-

self to God, each man warned and taught in the Apostolic ministry, name after name of men and women written down in everlasting individuality among the membership of the Church. But this is not the entire history of the progress of the Gospel. There is a Gospel of humanity, as well as of the individual soul. Man is not alone. He is in the family, and in society, and in government, and in the wide, wide world; and it must be that the Gospel shall act not only individually, but organically. Both ways, in actions and reactions, the Gospel goes, working deeper than the individual, not stopping with one generation of persons, beginning to create a new spirit of the age, making itself felt not only among men, but on man in regenerative power. "The Gospel, which is come unto you," says Paul to the Colossians in congratulation; "even as it is also in all the world bearing fruit and increasing," he adds, triumphantly. It is the Gospel in closer and closer contact with society, institutions, customs, trades, in all of which it generates a new spirit, and for all of which it promulgates a new law. Paul preached the Gospel in Ephesus, and he preaches it in contact with idolatry, and in antagonism to the business of idol-making; and his preaching of the one true God, as Demetrius the idol-maker acknowledged, brought the trade into disrepute. Nay, already, as we read, hundreds of the citizens who had followed the business of fortune-telling came out publicly, under the influence of the Gospel, and confessed their evil deeds, and made a big bonfire of the tools of their business. "So mightily grew the word of the Lord, and prevailed." It is the Gospel's own account of its power in human society, as well as in the human soul. It was at work everywhere, regenerating the

family, reconstructing the State, -ameliorating manners, changing the face of the world, transforming civilization.

But mark how the work was done. There we shall see the name Christian keeping company with every step of the slow, painful victory, the plain outward sign of the inward travail and toil. The name, the name itself, is distinctly heard, again and again; and the history of it is written in letters of blood. The history of the name Christian and the history of the great persecutions of the first three centuries write themselves together in the annals of the world. It is because the Gospel, in the life and upon the lips of the confessor of the Gospel, is now pressed, in a universal crisis, against Pagan government and Pagan society. Do you not already begin to recall the facts? The disciple of Christ has old friends among the heathen, who frequently invite him to a social banquet where meat will be offered to idols. The disciple of Christ dwells in a family where still some of the members piously worship the ancestral dead. The disciple of Christ is a slave, who is bidden to assist his master in the daily worship of the gods. The disciple of Christ is in Cæsar's army, and the decree has been issued that the soldiers must bow the knee to the image of the Emperor. It is a crisis of conflict between two religions—the religion of Christ, and idolatry; and the crisis is terrible because idolatry is the legalized religion, the religion of the Empire in law, authority, precedent, custom, and the Gospel seems to be set immovably against it all.

The Gospel was set against idolatry everywhere, whether in the family or in the State; and the conflict was bound to come, especially when millions of Roman citizens had confessed the Son of God. On a larger

scale now, no longer in provinces here and there, no longer because many individuals of this or that city have confessed a new faith, but because "the word of the truth of the gospel" is abroad—proclaimed throughout the world, a spirit in the air, a report in the streets, a rule of duty in daily conduct; because crowds of its confessors are heard confessing a King of kings and Lord of lords; because Cæsar claimed allegiance to himself, first and chief of all, while the disciples of Christ worshiped first and only the one true and living God,—in this dread crisis, when the decree went forth, persecution by law, the executioner's ax began to fall, and the hungry lions leaped upon their prey, and the confessors of the Gospel were dying.

The history of it all signalized a name. It was a name of reproach because those who wore it were persecuted. Among themselves they spoke of "the disciples," "the brethren," "the faithful," "the one body," "the Church"—spoke these terms and phrases with sweet, rich thoughts of one another, in sweet, tender feelings toward one another, in sweet, deep faith of the Gospel's power and hope. But as they stood before the hostile world, the world itself pronounced one name. The name was Christian. It was a name of reproach, not because the reproach grew out of the root of the name, but because the reproach was heaped upon the name by those that hated the ones to whom it was applied. It was the name between the Church and the world, and historically, notably, indelibly, significantly as the world persecuted the Church. The Church began to wear it humbly and patiently. It stood for suffering. It became the test of faith. It furnished the exact question

of trial—"Are you a Christian?" It showed the very spirit of the life of the confessor of the Gospel, the spirit of his Lord, the spirit of self-sacrifice, the willingness to deny one's self, and to take up one's cross daily, and, if need be, to die for truth in obedience to duty. So the conflict raged, the sword of persecution ready to drink the blood of the martyr, and the martyr patient, steadfast, brave, triumphant, simply confessing, "I am a Christian." It was a conflict between the sword of Cæsar and the Spirit of God, between the weapons of the flesh and the weapons of the truth, between the power of the crown and the power of the Cross. So the victory came. The martyr's blood became the seed of the Church, and the confessor's faith overcame the world. Silently, slowly, steadily, surely, the foundations of Paganism began to crumble, and, in lives of self-sacrifice, obedient even unto death, a new, transformed civilization began to appear. The martyr had glorified God in the name Christian, the name reproached and persecuted, and the glory of God now rested upon the name as it shone more and more in the transformations of the world. "Behold, how these Christians love one another!" said the Pagan as he marked the lives of those whom he hated. "What women these Christians have!" exclaimed a Pagan teacher of rhetoric when he heard from the lips of a Christian son the self-sacrifices of a Christian mother. The name, the very name Christian, had become the trophy of the Gospel in its conquests throughout the world. First the name of suffering, the name that shone strikingly in the battle of the Church against the world, it triumphed at last over the world in a baptism of glory.

3. *Its glory.* Do we not already see its excellent glory? Can we not understand why, occurring so little in the New Testament, not at all a familiar, current name with the disciples themselves in their meetings and greetings in the circle of the Church, yet in one notable Scripture it should be Divinely endorsed and Divinely glorified, and therefore forever Divinely authorized? If it had to be at first the name of suffering, so persecuted that an Apostle must exhort those that suffered for it, not to be ashamed of it, there necessarily must lie the secret of its glory. The law of the Cross became the law also of the name. The name Christian died, to live. It lost its life for Christ's sake, and found it. It worked its way to power and honor in the self-sacrifices which signalized it; and it became forever the name of humanity under the regeneration of the Gospel.

How rich the name Christian is, how broad, how vitally historical, a landmark, a clear distinction, a luminous ideal! It is a name for the humble disciple of Christ; and it is a name for ages, and institutions, and laws, and customs. We may grant the stains that its professed friends have frequently cast upon it; but its glory has outlived mistakes and misuses of the Church, and shines and will shine in unfading splendor. Is this not the Christian era? Is it an idle word to speak of a Christian nation or a Christian community? Are Christian sentiment and Christian statutes meaningless phrases? Is there not vital truth in the familiar description, a gentleman and a Christian, or a Christian gentleman? Is it empty talk when we say that such and such conduct becomes a Christian, or does not become him? Everywhere, distinctly, in-

structively, both a lesson and a standard, has not the name, the very name Christian, filled with the glory of God, entered into human life, where it remains ineradicably for its mighty influences of good, the sound of the name so true and sweet because the heart of it is so healthy and pure? Undeniably our civilization is what it is because it is Christian, really and professedly so. It is not atheistic; it is not infidel; it is not Pagan. Our own nation has been built by the toils, in the prayers and tears, of those who professed and called themselves Christians—whether the Puritan on Plymouth Rock, or the Dutchman on Manhattan Island, or the Quaker in the forests of Pennsylvania, or the Romanist along the shores of Maryland, or the Huguenot in the Carolinian swamps. You may charge that Christians still go to war, and that the nineteenth century has been soaked in the blood of Christians who slew one another; I say that war has been stayed between Christians, who appealed to the very name, and that Christians, glorying in the name and writing it upon societies and hospitals and nurseries, have mitigated or uprooted old-time evils of war, and at last conquered and established honorable peace. You may point to crime, to barbarisms, to suffering, to squalor, to wretchedness crouching almost under the shadow of cathedrals and churches. I appeal to the past, to what has been done in the name Christian—whether slowly it marked the emancipation of women or the inalienable rights of little children in the long travail of centuries, or whether suddenly one day, in the year of our Lord 404, as the vast amphitheatre of bloodthirsty spectators gloated over the savage show of the gladiators, it signalized that the barbarous game then and

there forever ceased as a Christian monk, in the passion of self-sacrifice, leaped into the arena, and smote the heart of humanity by receiving the blow of both swords on his devoted head. And I appeal to the present, that to-day, wherever on the large scale, not with the puny arm of an individual, but with the love and might of thousands banded together, gigantic work goes on against sin and ignorance and want and wrong, full high advanced appears in letters of living light the name, the name Divinely endorsed and glorified—"Woman's Christian Temperance Union," "Christian Education Society," organization after organization for social reform and progress glorifying God, and blessing man, in the name Christian.

The glory of the name to-day gives its rebuke tellingly against sectarian and divisive names among the followers of the Lord. Scripture, history, logic, all settle that the name is catholic, Divinely endorsed and Divinely authorized. In its presence of light and glory, we are hearing less and less of that pitiful, would-be indifference, What 's in a name? There is in a name what is in it. A rose by any other name will doubtless smell as sweet; but rose and fragrance are so one, the fact and the name, that laws and decrees could never divorce them. Names are spirit and life. Words are not merely the signs of ideas; they are the incarnation of ideas. Words are not simply the dress of thought; they are the embodiment of thought. Words are not only the coin of speech; they are the growths of speech, rooted in the very life of the soul. Truth generates a word in the subtle laboratory of the mind, and the word becomes a star, and shines forever. Out of the heart of human experience, sometimes the lone-

liness and patience of one man, again the wide and deep knowledge of one age, a word is born with wings, and it flies to and fro as an everlasting sign of peace or hope. Thought and words, duty and words, beauty and words—how they are wedded in all the life of man, very life of his very life, begotten, not made, in the depths of the soul. There is in words and names what is in them. There is in the great words and names what is in them—truth, spirit, life, experience, happiness, sorrow; in them not by accident, not for fashion, not as a whim, but as spiritual forces, to generate, or to cleanse, or to transform, or to signalize—the very word or name itself henceforth as real and immortal as truth or life. There is in great words and names what man has put into them, what God has breathed into them—what has grown into them, what lives in them eternally, in a unity of life and expression indissoluble. Home—liberty—love!—the life of God, and the life of man, together in them—will you try to waive them indifferently aside, or to change them? Christian!—who, before its glory, its good, its power, can actually ask, “What’s in a name?”

There is so much of glory, good, power in the name, that sectarian and divisive names are losing their hold on those that wear them. The feeling is growing that Christian is catholic and unsectarian, Divinely authorized, and that it is the rebuke of party names among God’s people with their sure tendencies of pride and division. All of that is in these exclusive names of denomination or sect: they foster pride, they work divisively, they emphasize separateness; they keep the children of God apart from one another by unscriptural, partisan tests of fellowship. Party names in re-

ligion mean party divisions in religion, in greater or less degree. "I am of Paul," said one of the Corinthians, who gloried in the liberty of Paul's free Gospel. "I am of Cephas," cried others, as they proudly remembered Moses and the Law. "I am of Apollos," boasted another set, to whom Apollos's rhetoric and eloquence had become a snare. Paul condemned it. "Is Christ divided?" he trenchantly asks. "Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" Party names in the Church are wrong, according to Paul. In them are jealousy and strife; in them is more or less division. No; not the names of inspired Apostles, not even these must the disciples of Christ ever be seen or heard to wear. The lesson is overwhelmingly plain and emphatic, that against party names and party strife in the church of Corinth Paul sounds a loud, loud warning, and prays for an undivided and indivisible union in that great congregation. "I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

It is this fact of the divisiveness and exclusiveness of every party name, that is gradually opening the eyes of so many Christians to the scripturalness and catholicity of the name Christian. The party name can not be scripturally defended. Not one Scripture can be educed in apology for it. "I am of Calvin," or "I am of Luther," or "I am of Wesley," or "I am of Campbell"—you can not justify it by the Scriptures. Whether you speak it in personal pride or in party defense, it is wrong according to the Word of God. The

party name both divides and excludes, inevitably. It exists because of a party, and it is worn for the sake of a party, dividing those that wear it from him whom it excludes for his not wearing it. No matter what the name, what the origin, what the meaning, what the history, what the associations, the party name among the followers of Jesus Christ is divisive and exclusive. The name may be Baptist, from an ordinance of the Gospel; it may be Episcopalian, or Presbyterian, or Congregational, from the polity of the Church; it may be Methodist, from the manner of life of those to whom it was originally applied. All of these names may have honest motives, and may express purposes or aspects of truth, and may suggest mighty historic memories, and may stir sweet personal affections. Nevertheless, they are party names among the followers of Christ. They are divisive and exclusive names. There is something in them. There is much in them. There is pride in them, and power in them—power in them to divide and exclude Christians from one another. They carry divisions, and they perpetuate exclusions. There is pride in them, and power in them—power to caricature truth, or to propagate error. They can but be partisan for any meaning and use. To accept a party name from a man or from a doctrine, from an ordinance or from a polity, to espouse it, wear it, glory in it, is unjustifiable in the light of God's Word. The custom is divisive and exclusive; and the Holy Spirit, speaking by the mouth of Paul, exhorts, "that there be no divisions among you."

Do we want a better proof that the party name is felt to be an evil, than the frank utterances of godly men concerning it? Its divisiveness and exclusiveness are

confessed sometimes in the very apologies or personal gratulations of it. "I thank God that in many respects I am a Methodist," once said a pious member in a union Sunday-school convention. "I thank God," he went on saying, "that in some respects I am a Southern Methodist." "But I thank God," he added fervently, "that in many more respects I am a Christian." It was an honest, manly confession, as we all recognized who heard it. But the heart of it, glorying in the catholic name Christian, carried a real undertone of rebuke of the party name for which the brother was thankful. As far as he espoused the name Methodist, as long as he maintained it, he that far and that long divided and excluded himself from other Christians. Stronger and more explicit than this admission was the thanksgiving of a Presbyterian minister over the conversions in one of Mr. Moody's great meetings—"I thank God, brethren, that Mr. Moody is making neither Presbyterians nor Baptists nor Methodists, but simply Christians." And just as frank and direct as this, was the speech of a Congregational preacher before the venerable American Board of Foreign Missions—"I have n't a dollar to spare in making Congregationalists; but who would not give all in missionary work to make Christians?" What is the downright meaning of such words? They are the beginning of the end of party names among those that profess and call themselves Christians. That is their real meaning. It can not be anything else. It is the feeling, vague or profound, that these party names are an evil—that they are weak, need excuse, call for explanations and limitations, at times must be put into the background, and even for a while be forgotten. It is the matter-of-fact, common-

sense logic, the logic of the heart hearing God's Word, that these party names, as far as they are professed, as far as they are insisted on, are necessarily divisive and exclusive, dividing and excluding Christians from one another. These men of God could not speak thus unless they felt that the party names of Christians are an evil, and that, in the full truth of the Gospel and in the full reality of the spiritual life, they have no proper place whatever. As they compare the party name with the name Christian, and glory rather in the latter, as they apologize for the party name, or limit it, or silence it, or forget it, there is the sure sign that the Spirit of truth is among them, and that as His light and life more and more fill their lives, sectarian names, divisive names, exclusive names, fading and withering, will fall away, as lifeless leaves drop to the ground before the healthy vigor of trees in the springtime.

But, you ask, is there not danger that the very name Christian may be professed in a sectarian spirit? May it not become a note of division and exclusion? Indeed there is such danger. I see the danger, and candidly admit it. The very catholic name Christian may become the shibboleth of a sect, the badge of a party. The like of such a danger was threateningly at work in the church of Corinth. The name of Christ Himself was there becoming a party name. Not only did some, glorying in Paul's free Gospel, declare, "I am of Paul"; and others, remembering Moses and the Law, "I am of Cephas"; and others, captivated by Apollos's rhetoric and eloquence, "I am of Apollos"; but another set still, revolting from the authority of human names, and professing the name of Christ, came under Paul's charge of contentions in the congregation,

as they spoke up, "I of Christ." And why? Because, professing the name of Christ, they were beginning to use it divisively and exclusively. According to Paul's accusation, they that said "I of Christ" were guilty of party spirit and party strife equally with him who boasted, "I of Paul," or "I of Cephas," or "I of Apollos." They were right in refusing to glory in the name of Paul: Paul was not crucified for them, they were not baptized into the name of Paul. The cross and baptism joined them to Christ, and Christ's they were, and they were right in glorying, "I belong to Christ," so long as they did not boast the name divisively and exclusively. But that was their guilt. In their saying "I of Christ," they so said it, so interpreted it, so applied it as plainly to show that, in their estimation, they were more of Christ's than these other brethren who were professing, some Paul's name, others Cephas's, others Apollos's. And the aggravation of their guilt was that, in crying out, "I of Christ," they purposed to profess that Christ was more of theirs by their depreciating wholly the human teacher, inspired though he might be. A Paul, a Cephas, an Apollos was nothing to them: they stigmatized his nothingness purposely, in their exclusive boast of the name of Christ. Thus their contention was becoming the most divisive of all, in that, while they thought they were magnifying the name of Christ, they were making it a mere party name on a level with the name of Paul, in contrast with the name of Cephas, in antagonism to the name of Apollos, and were in danger of shutting themselves off entirely from fellowship with those that were already dividing themselves in their separate names.

We may read the lesson for ourselves, indeed. All of them were wrong. It was wrong for some to boast, "I am of Paul," exalting Paul's name to a level with the name of Him who was crucified for them, into whose name they had been baptized. It was wrong for some to boast, "I of Cephas," and so boasting as to obscure the name of Christ. It was wrong for some to boast, "I am of Apollos," and so boasting as to disown any good for themselves in Paul or Cephas. It was worst of all for others to boast, "And I of Christ," and so boasting as to reject any possession whatever of Paul, or Cephas, or Apollos, to proclaim aloud a total independence of each one in their total dependence on Christ. All of them were wrong. It was wrong for one to say, "I of Paul," as if Cephas was nothing to him. It was wrong for one to say, "I of Apollos," as if Paul was nothing to him. It was just as wrong to be dividing the human teachers as to be dividing Christ. "What then is Apollos? and what is Paul?" the wholesome lesson reads. "Ministers through whom ye believed." They are nothing, neither he that plants nor he that waters, compared with God, who gives the increase. But he that plants, and he that waters, are one; they are both necessary; they are not to be divided; they are God's fellow-workers. What are they then to the Corinthians? still the wholesome lesson reads. Not something to be divided out and boasted of exclusively in parties; but not one of them to be despised nor disowned. And why? Listen!—how wholesome the lesson is. Listen to the very reason of the exhortation, "Let no one glory in men:" "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things

present, or things to come ; all are yours ; and ye are Christ's ; and Christ is God's." When a disciple could say, not, "I am Paul's," but "Paul is mine, and Cephas is mine, and Apollos is mine," then he is right in standing up and boasting, "I am Christ's." The name of Christ becomes not the shibboleth of a sect, not a divisive and exclusive name, when the human teacher is not despised nor disowned, is not boasted of as an exclusive master, nor followed as a divisive leader, but is regarded as one of the servants of truth, and the name of Jesus is the name in which we bow the knee, to the glory of God the Father.

Are not your own hearts swiftly reading the lesson still for ourselves? Does one say, "I am of Luther," or "I am of Calvin," or "I am of Wesley," or "I am of Campbell," or "I am of Christ"? ; Divisive and exclusive are we, there is contention among us, if we glory in any of the human names separately, and obscure the Divine name of Christ. Divisive and exclusive are we, if we think to exalt the name of Christ by despising or disowning any good for ourselves in these human teachers. Who was Luther? The prophet of liberty of conscience, who emphasized, critically and seasonably, justification by faith. Who was Calvin? The teacher who emphasized, critically and seasonably, the sovereignty of God against the craft of priests and the pride of kings. Who was Wesley? The teacher who emphasized, critically and seasonably, the need of holiness and zeal. Who was Campbell? The teacher who emphasized, critically and seasonably, the need of Christian union, against the lamentable divisions of Christendom. Are we not divisive and exclusive, if we can not say all together, in view of the good accom-

plished by each one of these teachers in the history of the kingdom of God, "Luther is mine, and Calvin is mine, and Wesley is mine, and Campbell is mine"? And is it not the very way not to glory in these men, to claim this universal possession of them, all of them ours, while all of us together heartily say, in throbbing gratitude, "And we are Christ's, and Christ is God's"?

So also is the name Christian. The same lesson speaks concerning it. Divinely authorized, Divinely endorsed, it may be used to promote the unity of the Spirit, or it may be used divisively and exclusively. It is catholic and unsectarian. Surely the time has come, in this age of the advocacy of Christian union, when you and I may say, subordinating or ignoring or disavowing all sectarian names, "I thank God that I am a Christian." That confession demonstrates that we regard the name as catholic and unsectarian. But, I ask you, I ask you in deep seriousness, where is the full good of such a confession of the name, if we have any use of sectarian names whatever? Think about the matter. Is it enough just to subordinate, or for the time to ignore, the sectarian names, while glorifying God in the name Christian? Why should they be used at all? Why should they not be disavowed altogether? Can they be used at all except divisively and exclusively? When one says, "I am a Methodist," and another, "I am a Baptist," are they not that far divided? But you ask me, "What right have you to use the name Christian alone? Is there not danger that you will profess that in a sectarian spirit?" Yes; there is such danger, as I disavow all names not Divinely authorized, and profess to be simply a Christian. If, while I profess to be

simply a Christian, I deny that others are Christians who profess also other names, then I use the name divisively and exclusively. But I have the right to profess and call myself a Christian, disavowing all sectarian names, if I do not deny the name to others who love and serve Christ. Nay, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit, with Paul's teaching before my eyes, I dare not glory in the names of men or ordinances or polity or methods, inevitably divisive and exclusive as those names are. With the name Christian, Divinely authorized, historically catholic, confessedly unsectarian, I must call myself by that name, and by no divisive and exclusive name. For the very reason that I acknowledge you to be a Christian, I do not sectarianize the name in using it to the disavowal of the sectarian name that you also profess. We who are advocating the Scripture doctrine of Christian union do not claim to be the only Christians. We profess to be Christians only, to the disavowal of all sectarian names. We thank God for the good of any teacher in the history of the kingdom of God; we will emphasize, when needed, the integrity of the ordinances of the Word; we will follow the line and liberty of church polity, according to the New Testament; we will advocate methods and expedients in furtherance of the Gospel. But we dare not coin nor accept any names of these, nor wear them, espouse them, use them divisively and exclusively. If others profess and call themselves Christians, and then profess and call themselves, even though faintly, by other names which are inevitably divisive and exclusive, the responsibility is theirs, not ours. If we profess and call ourselves Christians, disavowing all sectarian names while we gladly acknowl-

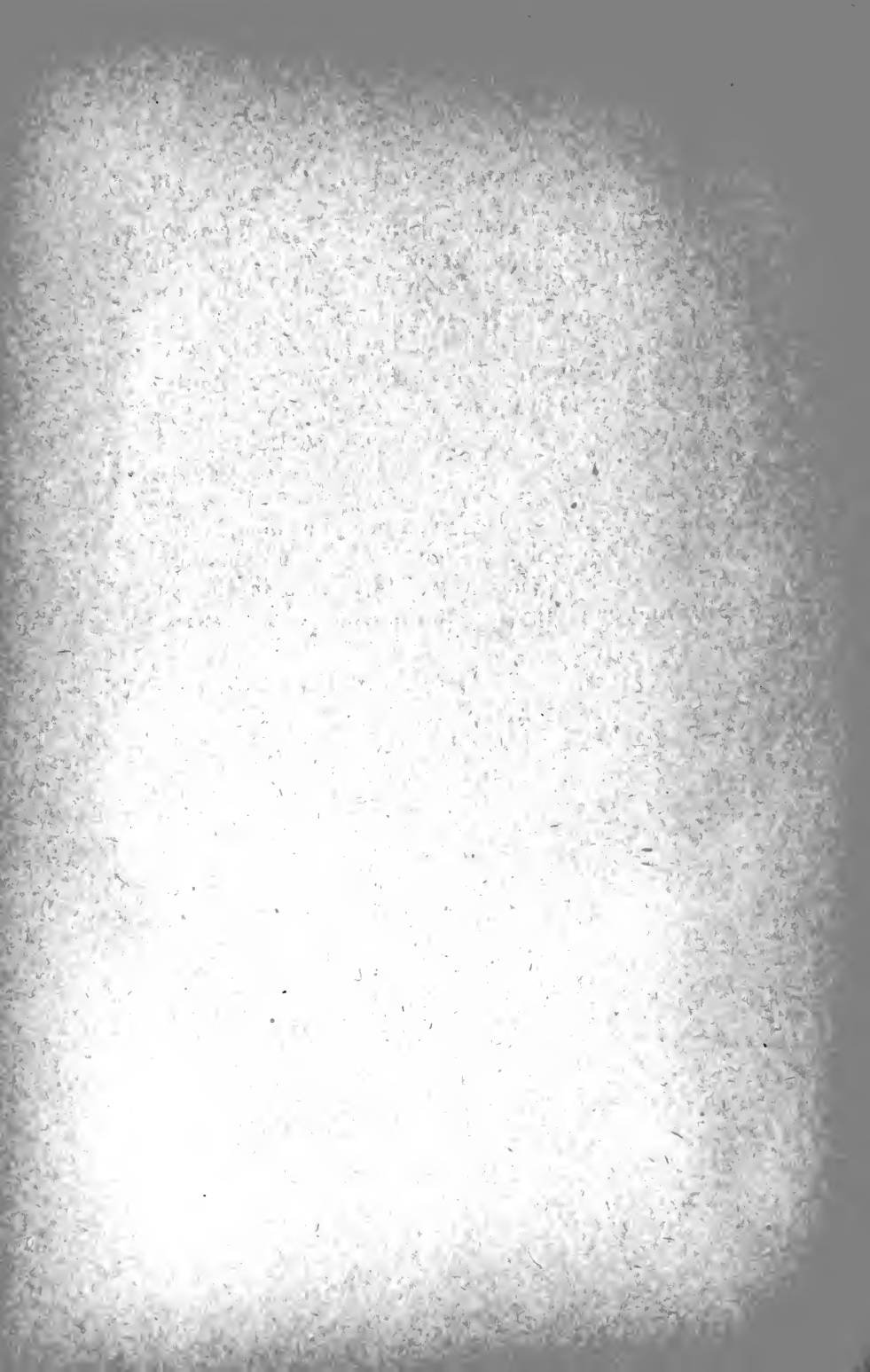
edge those as Christians who are using also these divisive and exclusive names, we are sure that we are not aggravating strife among the people of God, but are advocating the truth that breaks down walls of division and fosters the unity of the Spirit.

I know that the disavowal of all sectarian names, by itself will not be the cure of the divisions of Christendom. There is, indeed, needed back of this course the cure of the sectarian spirit. There must first be more love to God and man, more humility, more piety, more prayer, more good works, more world-wide evangelization. But these different names—Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Congregationalist, not to mention one-tenth of them—are divisive and exclusive. They are divisive not only in effect, but divisive in tendency. They not only express division, but augment and perpetuate division. They are in the way of Christian union. They entangle all endeavors to keep the unity of the Spirit. They are so many snags in the channels of brotherly love. They must no longer be defended in sectarian pride, nor excused in thoughtless sophistries, nor joked about in sentimental good-will, but disavowed and disused, if the rising tide of Christian union would sweep more rapidly and more sublimely to the consummation of the kingdom of God. The time must come when you and I must feel our individual responsibility, while glorifying God in the name Christian, not to profess a divisive and exclusive name. We may feel that responsibility, and discharge it, confessing the truth in love, in deep affection for some living who still wear the divisive name, in tender memory of some departed who wore it. I can recall the saintly face of an aged grand-

mother, as she pored in prayer over God's Word, feeding upon it and growing thereby unto salvation. But, in the light of God's Word, I can not profess and call myself by the divisive and exclusive name Baptist: I must profess and call myself a Christian, and a Christian only. I look hungrily upon the dignified portrait of the father whom I never knew, and my heart forever laments that it was my lot not to know him on earth (I shall see and know him there!), and to hear him humbly pray, and to see the quiet, beautiful faith in which he lived and died. But, in the light of God's Word, I can not profess and call myself by the divisive and exclusive name Episcopalian: I must profess and call myself a Christian, and a Christian only. I look around me to-day, and I behold men and women who walk with God, and glory in the cross of Christ, and at their feet I could sit to learn more of piety and love. But, in the light of God's Word, I can not profess and call myself by the divisive and exclusive name of Methodist, nor of Presbyterian, nor of Congregationalist: I must profess and call myself a Christian, and a Christian only. I must profess and call myself a Christian, and a Christian only, as against any and all divisive and exclusive names in the Church of God.

It is the unsectarian and catholic name, Divinely approved, Divinely authorized. Tried in the hot fires of persecutions, baptized in the blood of martyrs, it has become a radiant name of glory in the progress of the Gospel. Here is the high privilege—we may glorify God in the name Christian. Redeemed in Christ, receiving and not rejecting your salvation, glorying in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, baptized into the

name of Christ, you may glorify God in the name Christian. Do you believe in your heart on Jesus Christ? Will you confess your faith, and espouse the name, and wear it with honor and courage before the world? Will you wear it humbly in brotherly love, and steadily refuse any divisive and exclusive name of Christendom, and in the spirit of Christ stand as a witness, by your very name, for the unity of the body of Christ? Decide here and now, in the light of the glory of the name Christian. Will you, as you live, or as you die, while you are happy, when you suffer, in the days of thy youth, and in a good old age, in the busy rounds of work, or in the pauses of rest, in life, in death, will you glorify God in the name CHRISTIAN?



SERMON X.

THE FEAR OF HELL.

X.

THE FEAR OF HELL.

“And be not afraid of them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul : but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”—*Matt. x. 28.*

“The Revised Version has done away with Hell ”—so we all have seen the report going the rounds of the newspapers, and such has been even the talk of the street or of some familiar gathering. The way was freely open for the news. It was not merely that the drunkard or the libertine was ready to hear that there would be no place of torment beyond the grave for him in his wickedness. The spread of the report had something else to help it on besides the congratulations of selfish hearts. The fact seemed to have a dignity of support from the very voices of learned men. Certain pulpits plead aloud for what they called “eternal hope ;” certain pens declared that any belief of a Hell is antiquated, the rubbish of medieval theology, and unworthy of the spirit of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the opposition to such doctrine has become bolder and more aggressive still in making home-thrust charges on the matter. “Has there not been a change in the preaching on this subject? Do you hear it often from the pulpit of even those who profess still to believe the doctrine? Would the people listen at all to one of the old-time sermons on hell? Is not such a dogma practically abandoned in the majority of churches nowadays?”

There is one question, the supreme question, that nine times out of ten goes unasked in all this talk about Hell. The real concern for you and me is, not first whether there has been a revolution in the preaching on this subject; not first whether thousands of pulpits are silent and silenced on the doctrine; not first whether Christendom any longer believes its creeds concerning Hell. No. What I want to know, and what you should want to know, is whether the Word of God teaches that there is a Hell. Is there a Hell according to the Word? Is the doctrine plain enough to be understood? Ought we to know the doctrine? Is a man simply deceiving himself when, with the Scriptures scattered at his feet, he shuts his eyes to the doctrine, and blindly refuses to examine candidly whether the doctrine be so? Especially, with the Revised Version of the Holy Bible in our hands, what light does it throw on the doctrine? Has it made any changes in the Scriptures of the doctrine? Has it actually "done away with" Hell? These are the questions that we ought to think about. With consciences in us, with the knowledge of good and evil, with the sense of duty burning in our hearts, with the judgment of God already begun there, what does God's Word teach concerning Hell?

Do I mean to deny that there has taken place a momentous change in the voice of the pulpit in regard to this doctrine? I concede the fact of such a change. The change is strikingly plain as to all the spirit and style of the doctrine. You elders in Israel remember the old-time way. It was not only that there was many a sermon on Hell, but each sermon was lurid with its awful fires, and audiences trembled and groaned as

they heard nothing but thunder tones of the judgment to come. The preacher's look was one of frenzy ; his manner breathed vengeance. There were terrible descriptions of death. There were frightful stories of death-bed scenes. There were appalling pictures of the torments of the damned. Many a time the day of judgment was dramatized at length, and the fiery speaker would enact a part with hideous notions of that day of wrath. Yes ; such a style of the doctrine has been changed, irreversibly. The presentation of the doctrine was wrong. It was not authorized in God's Word. It has necessarily fallen into disrepute. The weak point of the old-fashioned preaching on Hell was that it addressed chiefly, if not only, the imagination. In the extreme form it stirs feelings simply, with an overwhelming force at first ; but it works little or no conviction of judgment ; and when the emotions have subsided, a reaction sets in, and men believe less in a Hell than before. Such a manner of doctrine was not true to the spirit and style of God's Word, and not true to man's conscience in the sight of God. There need be no surprise at the silence of preacher after preacher on the subject. If there had been no other elements at work in such a change of attitude, the violence and caricature of the preaching of other days would account a good deal why the very word Hell is seldom heard in the pulpit, and why any doctrine of it seems to have been forgotten altogether.

But, you ask, how about the Revised Version ? what has occasioned the report that it no longer teaches a Hell ? Very well. Let us know the facts. We may open our Bible, and read them for ourselves. It is true that in not a few verses of the old King James's

version, in Scripture after Scripture, where the word "hell" is found, we shall, if we examine the change of these in the Revised Version, no longer find this term. The changes of the word in these passages are radical changes. It is not simply a different word for the same idea; it is a different word for a different idea. The common notion of "hell" is not taught in the verses where those changes occur. These radical changes, these weighty changes, are true. But is the doctrine of Hell still taught in the Word of God? Shall we find it still in the most scholarly version of the English Bible? I beg you to go with me candidly to-night over these Scriptures. Let us take time, in a fair interest of mind, in a serious interest of heart, to see what is so concerning this doctrine.

1. Let us note *this revision of the word in the Old Testament.*

The word "hell" occurs in King James' version of the Old Testament thirty-two times, viz.: Deut. xxxii. 22; II. Sam. xxii. 6; Job xi. 8, xxvi. 6; Psalms ix. 7, xvi. 10, xviii. 5, lv. 15, lxxxvi. 13, cxvi. 3, cxxxix. 8; Prov. v. 5, vii. 27, ix. 18, xv. 11, 24, xxiii. 14, xxvii. 20; Isa. v. 14, xiv. 9, 11, 15, xxviii. 15, 18, lvii. 9; Ezek. xxxi. 16, 17, xxxii. 21, 27; Amos ix. 2; Jon. ii. 2; Hab. ii. 5.

In the Revised Version, instead of occurring thirty-two times, it occurs only fourteen times. In the verses where the changes occur, the changes are made, **unmistakably**, because "hell," as we think of the word, not only does not express the original Hebrew, but misleads the English reader. As to the changes in these eighteen places, we have, in three of them (Deut. xxxii. 22, Psalms lv. 15, lxxxvi. 13), the word "pit,"

and in the remaining fifteen (II. Sam. xxii. 6; Job xi. 8, xxvi. 6; Psalms. ix. 17, xvi. 10, xviii. 5, cxvi. 3, cxxxix. 8; Prov. v. 5, vii. 27, ix. 18, xv. 11, 24, xxiii. 14, xxvii. 20) the peculiarly strange word *Sheol*, written with a capital S. Not only are these radical changes made, but even in the fourteen places where the word "hell" remains, this strange word *Sheol* is placed in the margin, with the remark that it is the term used in the Hebrew.

The interest in these significant changes as to "hell" in the Revised Version turns on the meaning of *Sheol*. It is a strange word to English eyes and ears. What does it mean? Why have these scholars put it fifteen times into the text as a substitute for "hell"? Why have they placed it in the margin as an explanation, or a possible substitute for "hell" in the fourteen other places where "hell" is still retained? What is its meaning, that its place in the Bible, instead of "hell," must do away with the common notion of "hell" in the passages where the new word occurs?

The Hebrew word *Sheol* meant to the Jewish mind the unseen world whither went the spirit of man at death. It was the under-world, the land of darkness, of the shadow of death, where the light is as darkness, with its gates and bars, its subterranean depths swallowing men alive, its snares taking hold of the living; insatiable, stern and cruel. It stood thus for the unseen world, as pictured in the Jewish mind, without any reference to pains and penalties that souls might suffer there as a final retribution. Amid all the references of the Old Testament to *Sheol*, representing it as death, the grave, the dark under-world, it is true that not one of them describes *Sheol* as what we now understand

by "hell." Where, therefore, the English reader of the Bible comes across the "hell" of the King James version, and in such a connection that he would be led to think of it in the light of the popular notion, there the revisers have struck out "hell" and substituted *Sheol*. For instance, to take a well-known passage, at Psalm ix. 17, we read, in the old version, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God;" but in the Revised Version we read, "The wicked shall return to *Sheol*, even all the nations that forget God." With the popular notion of "hell," we would understand the verse as teaching that the wicked and disobedient nations should be banished to the place of endless punishment; but in the light of the Jewish conception of *Sheol*, the Psalmist is picturing the downfall of the nations, the sudden cutting off of the people, that neglect to obey Jehovah. The prophecy is akin to that other saying, "Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." Again at Psalm lv. 15, where David is invoking the judgment of God on a friend that had turned traitor, we read in the old version, "Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell;" but in the Revised Version we read, "Let death come suddenly upon them, let them go down alive into the pit." The Psalmist has in mind, not the final retribution beyond death, but death itself as it seizes upon the victim unaware, and hurries him in the pride of health and life to an untimely grave. Once more, at Psalm xvi. 10, we have the sublime prophecy concerning the Saviour's resurrection; and here the old version reads, "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." This passage, as well as

the translation of it as quoted by the Apostle Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 27-31), has always been a puzzle to many. It has given them, as they have read both prophecy and fulfillment, the impression that the soul of Jesus, after his crucifixion, went into "hell." Indeed, too, in the so-called Apostles' Creed, as repeated by the devout churchman from his prayer-book, we find the statement: "He descended into hell." But the Revised Version no longer puzzles the reader on this point as to Jesus going down into "hell." It reads: "For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol," meaning that God would not abandon the soul of His Son to the abode of the dead.

The study of these changes makes it plain enough why the revisers could not leave the word "hell" in the passages quoted. Our idea of "hell" is not there. It is a different idea; and, therefore, they must give us a different word.

But the question arises, Why put in this strange word *Sheol*, so new to English eyes and English ears? The reason of the revisers is, that, according to their judgment, no one word in English accurately and completely represents the Hebrew word. Not "death," not the "grave," not the "pit," not the "under-world"—none of these terms would, in their opinion, do each time for the word *Sheol* in its wonderfully solemn and sublime uses in the Word of God. Where the word first occurs (Gen. xxxvii. 35), translated *grave* in the old version, Jacob is speaking his great sorrow, refusing to be comforted, believing that Joseph has been torn into pieces by an evil beast—"For I will go down to the grave for my son mourning." The revisers have left *grave*, and in the margin have spoken

as follows: "Heb. *Sheol*, the name of the abode of the dead, answering to the Greek *Hades*, Acts ii. 27." We all, therefore, need not be in the dark as to the meaning of the word *Sheol*, a Hebrew word, the name of the abode of the dead—a word which no one term in English can adequately represent, and which, therefore, the revisers have translated sometimes "grave," sometimes "pit," but generally have introduced into the English text as a literal Hebrew word. It will be only a question of time for us to become used to the name. "Jehovah" is Hebrew; "Hallelujah" is Hebrew; "Messiah" is Hebrew. We are used to all these words. We can soon become just as familiar with *Sheol* as with these.

Indeed, the American members of the Revision Committee have gone further than the British revisers on this point. With characteristic progressiveness, willing to accept fully the results of exact scholarship, they advocate in their appendix to the Revised Version of the Old Testament, that we "substitute 'Sheol' wherever it occurs in the Hebrew text, for the rendering the 'grave,' the 'pit,' and 'hell,' and omit these renderings from the margin." The British revisers have, for some cause, been more conservative. They have retained "hell" fourteen times as found in the passages noted above, in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Jonah and Habakkuk, although in every occurrence they put *Sheol* in the margin, that the English reader may not be misled into the popular notion of "hell," even in the verses where it is retained. In these passages the word is used in its primitive, its etymological sense of a place of darkness or concealment, thus still expressing the idea of the Hebrew *Sheol* as death, "the

grave," "the pit," "the under-world." For instance, at Isa. xiv. 9-15, in the awful curse threatened against the king of Babylon, we read: "Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee. . . . Thy pomp is brought down to hell, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is under thee, and worms cover thee. . . . Thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the uttermost parts of the pit." In a figurative application of this sense of *Sheol*, the revisers have retained "hell" at Jonah ii. 2, where the truant prophet prays to God: "I called by reason of my affliction unto the Lord, and he answered me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice."

The conclusion of the matter as to the doctrine of Hell in the Revised Version of the Bible is plain enough, so far as the Old Testament is concerned. *The common idea of Hell is not in the Old Testament at all.* We may not go to the Old Testament to find a proof-text of the orthodox idea of "hell." The Hebrew word *Sheol*, translated in the old version sometimes "grave," sometimes "pit," sometimes "hell," never covers the idea of a place of complete and final retribution. This word, rendered in the Revised Version of the Old Testament sometimes "grave," sometimes "pit," but oftener simply transliterated, refers to *the abode of departed spirits*, without determining the destiny of the dead. And in the fourteen places where "hell" is still retained, we are told, in the margin, that the Hebrew word is *Sheol*, by which we understand that "hell" is there used in its primary sense of a state of darkness or concealment—a meaning abundantly confirmed by the sentiment of the passages.

Such is the truth concerning "hell" in the Revised Version of the Old Testament. We need not be surprised at this conclusion. The Old Testament is not the complete revelation of God. As a revelation it is incomplete, fragmentary, prophetic. Its utterances about the future life of the godly, or of the ungodly, are generally vague, indefinite, imperfect. Here and there is a burst of hope from the lips of seer or saint concerning immortality. But its doctrine is not a perfect doctrine as to retribution beyond the grave. We must go to the New Testament for the full revelation of the truth and will of God. "God having of old-time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets, by divers portions and in divers manners, hath, at the end of these days, spoken unto us in his Son." The vital interest of this question of the doctrine of "hell" in the Revised Version of the Bible centers on the New Testament.

2. Let us, therefore, note *this revision of the word in the New Testament.*

The word "hell" occurs in King James's version of the New Testament twenty-three times, viz.: Matt. v. 22, 29, 30; x. 28; xi. 23; xvi. 18; xviii. 9; xxiii. 15, 33; Mark ix. 43, 45, 47; Luke x. 15; xii. 5; xvi. 23; Acts ii. 27, 31; Jas. iii. 6; II. Pet. ii. 4; Rev. i. 18; vi. 8; xx. 13, 14. In the Revised Version, instead of occurring twenty-three times, it occurs only thirteen times. In the verses where the changes occur they are made, unmistakably, because "hell," as we think of the word, not only does not express the original Greek, but misleads the English reader. As to the changes in these ten places (Matt. xi. 23; xvi. 18; Luke x. 15; xvi. 23; Acts. ii. 27, 31; Rev. i. 18;

vi. 8; xx. 13, 14), we have every time the peculiar word *Hades*, written with a capital H.

The interest as to these significant changes as to "hell" in the Revised Version of the New Testament turns on the meaning of *Hades*. It is a strange word to English eyes and ears. What does it mean? Why have these scholars put it ten times into the text as a substitute for "hell"? What is its meaning, that its place in the Bible, instead of "hell," must do away with the common notion of "hell" in the passages where the new word occurs?

The Greek word *Hades* corresponds to the Hebrew word *Sheol*. In the Septuagint, which is a Greek translation of the Old Testament, *Sheol* is translated by *Hades*; and in the original Greek of the New Testament, the writers, taking a term that will express the idea of *Sheol*, write *Hades*. The English reader, as we have seen, is left in no doubt as to the meaning of either of these new words. Let him turn to Gen. xxxvii. 35, and there in the margin he reads that *Sheol* means "the abode of the dead, answering to the Greek, *Hades*." For the same reason, the revisers have not translated *Hades*, but simply transliterated it. There is no one term in English by which it can be adequately represented. It will be only a question of time for us to become used to the name. "Christ" is Greek; "psalm" and "hymn" are Greek. We are used to these words. We can soon become just as familiar with *Hades* as with these.

The significance of the substitution of *Hades* for "hell" in those ten passages, can, with our knowledge of the meaning of *Hades*, be readily appreciated. For instance, at Matt. xvi. 18, Jesus says that the "gates,"

not of "hell," as we read in the old version, but of *Hades*, shall not prevail against His Church. He means that the abode of the dead shall not always hold His people behind its bars. This idea agrees with what we read at Rev. i. 18, xx. 13. Jesus declares, "I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." The prophet of the Lord announces, "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them." In none of the ten passages would "hell" correctly represent the Greek word. The idea of "hell" is not in these passages; and the revisers have, therefore, necessarily given us a different word.

Now comes the vital point of this whole study. What about "hell" in the thirteen passages? Why is it retained there? What is the meaning of "hell" in these passages? We have seen that the orthodox idea of Hell is not in the Old Testament at all, according to the Revised Version. What does the New Testament, according to the Revised Version, give on the subject?

In twelve of these thirteen passages of the Revised Version of the New Testament where "hell" is still retained (Matt. v. 22, 29, 30; x. 28; xviii. 9; xxiii. 15, 33; Mark ix. 43, 45, 47; Luke xii. 5; James iii. 6), the original word is not Greek, but Hebrew. But it is not the Hebrew *Sheol*, rendered so often "hell" in the old version of the Old Testament, and still so translated fourteen times in the Revised Version of the Old Testament, although (let us remember) not used, in these occurrences, in the orthodox sense of "hell." The Hebrew word translated "hell" twelve times in the Revised Version of the New Testament is a differ-

ent word altogether. It is *Gehenna*; so the English reader may see in the margin of these twelve passages. What is the meaning of *Gehenna*? What is the meaning, that the revisers translated it into "hell" twelve times, or, to speak more accurately, leave it, unchanged in these twelve occurrences as found in the old version.

The word *Gehenna* means literally the *Valley of Hinnom*. This narrow valley, running along the south of Jerusalem, had, in Old Testament times, been the scene of the idolatrous worship of Moloch, to whom the apostate Jews burnt even infants in sacrifice. King Josiah, in his work of reformation (II. Ki. xxiii.) desecrated the abominable place; and in after years it became the receptacle of the dead bodies of criminals and the carcasses of animals, and every other kind of filth. Either in allusion to the idolatrous fires of Moloch, or, as some think, from the consumption of the carrion by flames kept steadily going, the Jews of the latter time used the word as a symbol of the retribution of the wicked. Such was the use of the term when Christ appeared. This Hebrew word, *Gehenna*, Christ finds current among the Jews, in the sense of the place of the retribution of the wicked; and He begins to use it.

Now, all the interest of the doctrine of "hell" in the Revised Version of God's Word turns on the use made of this word GEHENNA by the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the twelve occurrences of *Gehenna* in the New Testament, it is used eleven times by Christ himself, once by James in his Epistle. The revisers have let "hell" stand as their translation of *Gehenna*. The voice of scholarship is a united voice on the meaning of *Gehenna*, as held by the Jews when Christ appeared.

To the Jews it was the awful word by which they expressed their conception of the retribution of the wicked. In what sense does Jesus use it? Let us note some of these passages in the Revised Version, "hell" standing for *Gehenna*. "Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire" (Matt. v. 22). "It is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell" (Matt. v. 29). "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?" (Matt. xxiii. 33). What does this sound like? Does it not sound solemn and awful? Hear Jesus Christ again in His use of *Gehenna*, translated "hell." "If thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out; it is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark ix. 47, 48). It is no longer simply *Sheol*, the name of the abode of the dead, indeterminate as to the retribution of the dead. It is *Gehenna*, a different word. It is used by the Lord Jesus Christ. He associates it with "fire" and with "judgment." He warns men of the danger of the *Gehenna* of fire, and the danger of the judgment of *Gehenna*—the danger of the "hell" of fire, the danger of the judgment of "hell." But the strongest passages are yet to be heard from. Listen! "And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom ye shall fear; Fear him, which after he hath killed hath authority to cast into hell" (Luke xii. 5). Do we desire the awful admonition of this passage—this awful admonition concerning "hell"—in a still clearer light?

Listen! "And be not afraid of them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. x. 28).

Gehenna, still translated "hell" in the Revised Version, is, according to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, the place of retribution for the wicked and disobedient—the place of "fire," the place of "judgment"—the place where not only the *body*, but also the *soul* may be destroyed.

The serious question for us now is, Will we hear this solemn truth of God's Word? "Hell" is not "done away with" in the Revised Version of the Bible. It is still there. By the decision of representative scholarship, it is still a part of the Word of God. It is not taught in the Old Testament; but it is taught in the New Testament. The Revised Version of the Bible brings out luminously the impressive fact that it is the Lord Jesus Christ chiefly who speaks of Hell. James describes the tongue that is "set on fire by hell." Peter speaks of the angels whom God "cast down to hell." But in *eleven* of the *thirteen* occurrences of the word in the Revised Version of the New Testament, it falls from the lips of Jesus Christ. It is the Son of God who teaches us the fear of Hell. The deep lesson to us is not only that He teaches it, but how He teaches it.

Have you marked closely the spirit and method of Christ's doctrine of Hell? It is not the staple of His teaching, is it? He does not go about breathing threatening and slaughter against the world, does He? No, no. He comes with the Gospel of salvation. He goes about doing good. He feeds the hungry; He

heals the sick; He raises the dead; He preaches good tidings to the poor. His presence is light to all those that sit in darkness. He invites the weary to come unto Him for rest. He receives sinners, and eats with them. He rejoices with those that rejoice, and weeps with those that weep. He graces the wedding feast, and comforts the funeral train. First and foremost, steadily, He is the Saviour of the world, and the Friend of sinners, and the Light of life, and the Lord of glory. It is He, the Son of God and the Son of man, who teaches the fear of Hell. But mark His spirit, and let us bend and listen, and reverently hear His tone. He speaks in no frenzy. There is no glare in His eye. No malign passion burns in His words. His voice is the voice of love: "I say unto you, my friends." He speaks plainly on the subject, and His speech is solemn warning. But mark again, He does not unroll a panorama of Hell. He does not describe detail after detail of penalty and torture. He addresses chiefly, not the imagination, but the conscience. He inculcates a wholesome fear of Hell. He teaches the truth in simple and solemn figure, appealing to the conscience, inciting us to be sober and dutiful, so as to escape "the judgment of hell."

It ought to be enough for us that the Son of God pronounced dark judgment in doctrine and precept. Oh! yes, the light of love shines fullest and widest, and words of mercy fall freely in blessing. But there is the cloud, and again the warning sound, and again the lightning stroke of judgment; more than once the exhortation to fear, and to flee the wrath of God. It was because men were sinning against the light of their redemption that Jesus utters His terrible judgment. It

was because Pharisee and Sadducee and scribe loved darkness, and hated the Christ of God, that the same lips which breathed "Blessed," pronounced "Woe!" "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?" Prodigal sons and women that were sinners, publicans, harlots, robbers—over all in whom there was the least sign of redeeming grace, the voice of love declared, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench." But against self-righteous men, against proud men who despised others, against would-be teachers of truth who contradicted the truth in their practice, against the heartless priest and the cold-blooded Levite, especially against men who professed religion while they lived a lie, Jesus Christ pronounced the judgment of Hell. Not in frenzy, not in malice, not in any gloating delight of condemnation, but in the prophet's voice of righteous indignation, whose tones grew soft again amid regrets and tears—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

The Word of God abides. The doctrine of Hell is there. It will come home to our hearts and consciences, as we humbly read it or hear it. Why should we blind our eyes to it in fatal self-deception? There is not a line of truth in the Scriptures concerning Hell, not a word, which has not its signs and proofs already in human life. They may be dim, vague, shadowy; but they may be seen, they make themselves felt, in many a man's life. Conscience bears witness to Hell.

Every day is a judgment day with us, the judgment of God in our hearts already, the premonition of the climax of judgment when we shall be "made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." It is the sheerest trifling to debate whether Hell is a place or a condition. The great religious poet puts into Satan's mouth words true both to the teaching of the Bible and to the experience of human life.

"Me miserable! which way shall I fly
Infinite wrath and infinite despair?
Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell."

So true is it that here and now are the signs and foretastes of Hell in men's hearts, and in men's lives. Have we not seen its baleful fires already kindled in this world? These dens of vice and crime, the bar-room, the gambling hole, the brothel, where men and women riot in debauchery, what are they but ante-chambers of Hell? The body that is foul with liquor, and burnt out with lust, what brand does it bear upon it but the doom of Hell? The assassin who shoots down the president of a nation—the brute who way-lays an innocent child—the demon who murders his wife with her unborn babe—are not such sins evident, going before to judgment, the judgment of Hell? When men live wickedly in broad daylight, debauching body and soul together, and die cursing God and rejecting salvation, what is before them but the eternal destruction of body and soul in Hell?

Nay, more—not only these evident sins, these hardened and impenitent lives in which the fires of Hell are glaring, but the secret sins, the sins under cover of

respectability, the vices that hide themselves in social graces, the villanies carried on with a show of intellect and taste—here, too, is the beginning of the judgment of Hell. Do you think that, because you are deceiving others, you also deceive God? Are you sure that you are deceiving others? Are you more than half self-deceived? Do there come no pricks of conscience, as men make a show of morality while indulging in secret vices? There never was such guilty living, fair before the world but foul within, which did not have its stings of heart, the first proofs of the judgment to come. The sepulcher may be white, outwardly beautiful, but inwardly are dead men's bones and all uncleanness. The face may wear a smile, and the manners may have their grace; but the soul has begun to wither and die. The revelation of the wrath of God only declares what has been true all along in these hypocritical lives. If you yield to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, whether disgraced openly or hiding your shame in social glitter and style, sin goes on breeding in the soul all the same; and sin, says the Word of God, "when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death." This side of the judgment-seat of Christ, this side of the grave, there is not one of us but needs to fight the Hell within himself first. Even where we yield to the grace of God, and pray, and seek to live a manner of life worthy of the Gospel, the conflict, the dire conflict, rages within—little hells unmistakably in the heart, hells of pride, hells of selfishness, hells of hatred and misjudgment of others, even hells of dark unbelief of God. We know it, we know it, as we have ever humbled ourselves in a deep sense of the need of salvation. We have felt and known it some-

times, beyond all doubt, that the Word of God is true, describing the fact within us, as the tongue was hurried to drop its deadly poison, that it was "set on fire by hell"! The victory of a life of faith and righteousness over the Hell of fire within us, the victory of Christ in redemption day by day, we all need, to save us from the eternal destruction of body and soul in Hell.

O my fellow-men! will we hear the Lord Jesus Christ as he teaches us the judgment of Hell? Will you go on disobeying Him, some indifferent, some self-satisfied, some openly rebellious and defiant? Will you sin on with the flagrant sins of the flesh, or be self-deceived in the hidden sins of the heart? Hear the Gospel of your salvation. See the Son of God crucified for your redemption. Behold God in Christ, reconciling you to Himself, not counting your sins against you, loving you, forgiving you, His long-suffering still your salvation as He waits, with out-stretched hands, and calls all the day long, for you to accept it. The grace of God brings you salvation, right home to your heart where the Holy Spirit strives with you to receive it, and henceforth live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world, in hope of eternal life. Which will you do—will you accept Christ in His exceeding mercy, or will you deliberately sin against light and love, and refuse to obey His Gospel? Hear the end of those that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus—"Who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might."

SERMON XI.

SELF-RESPECT AND SALVA-
TION OF YOUNG MEN.



XI.

THE SELF-RESPECT AND SALVATION OF YOUNG MEN.

"And as he was going forth into the way, there ran one to him, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said to him, Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, even God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor thy father and mother. And he said unto him, Master, all these things have I observed from my youth. And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me. But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful; for he was one that had great possessions."—*Mark x. 17-22.*

It is the picture of a young man seeking the presence of Jesus. We need not be surprised that he is eager to inquire of the Great Teacher. The young men are always among the first to receive the impressions of a great intellectual or moral movement of the age, and to drink in the new doctrine of some master of thought. We always think of Socrates and the Athenian youth together. The live teacher and leader is always sure to count among his disciples an army of young men, to imbibe his spirit and to advocate his views. The attitude of the youthful mind that has once been awakened to a sense of its capacities and powers, is a fascinating one. The teacher of young

men, who appreciates his privilege, will always testify to the dignity and joy of his office. Their minds are open; they have eyes to see; they have ears to hear; their inquiries are eager, their thirst for knowledge intense, and their convictions also quickly formed and positive, and as often quickly changed; while all the time, amid questions and debates, amid wonders and advocacies, there is evident an unshaken sense of self, and an emphasis of self-hood, and usually in such a sincere and manly way, that it may well be designated *the self-respect of young men*. It is a great element to count on. A young man that lacks it is a weakling. There is in it a divineness of capacity, which is there for great good, if it be rightly unfolded. It is always admirable in itself.

This was the kind of young man that sought so eagerly the presence of Jesus. He already had public office, rulership among the Jews. We can plainly see in him all the frankness, the sincerity, the manliness, the self-respect of youth. He has the consciousness of moral integrity. He has also the aspiration for the highest ideal of moral good, eternal life. Is it any wonder that he deeply interested the Master? We want to see what Jesus thinks of the self-respect of a young man. How will He look on it, what will He say of it, how will it be handled under His all-wise teaching and guidance? It may be that this self-respect will need a new light, a new turn, a disclosure of a deeper depth of moral need. It may be that Jesus, not denying what the young man thinks of himself, never once slighting the spirit that the young man shows, will yet open his eyes to a lack in his moral character that can but sober and humble him, and con-

vict him of a want that lies below all his honesty and respect for self. It is indeed a beautiful picture of a young man, as he knelt there in the way before Jesus Christ, his mind and heart aglow with a vision of the loftiest ideal that can haunt the dreams of youth. His self-respect vividly stirred a peculiar feeling in the Master. We want to see how Jesus looks on the self-respect of young men, as it also feels the hauntings of something better and more complete than itself.

The young man comes eagerly, running, and kneeling in profound obeisance before this Rabbi who has been startling the multitude with his authoritative style of teaching. "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" It is the hungry question of youth, in all sincerity and self-respect. The question—do you not see how at once it has a two-fold sound? He seems to say, in one tone, "Is there anything not yet done by me that keeps me short of eternal life?"—that much self-confidence. Yet, in another tone, he seems to feel a certain lack, he hardly knows what. Jesus replies; and His very first words are meant to correct the young man's conception of this highest ideal of life. The young man's eyes are in the right direction; but he does not see clearly. "What shall I do?" or, "What good thing shall I do?" and these questions addressed to one looked on simply as a Jewish Rabbi—"Good Master": no, the young ruler has an incomplete conception of goodness. He is singling it out, as one thing to be done by itself, or as something only that remains to be done, in hope of eternal life. He is making of it a fragmentary matter, and a kind of object of mere question and answer, or of dialogue and debate, and Jesus a mere Rabbi to

be interrogated at length about it. Mark the answer of Jesus. "Why callest thou me good?" or, "Why askest thou me concerning that which is good?" Jesus is more than a Jewish Rabbi; but as He is looked upon and addressed only thus, He will not receive thus such an appellation. The young man's conception of goodness must be clarified and heightened. It must rise above the appreciation of a good Rabbi, and above the notion of some abstract object—"good thing," or "that which is good." Mark the answer of Jesus. "One there is who is good"; or, "None is good save one, even God." Goodness is no abstraction; it is vital and personal. Goodness is no fragment; it is the very perfection of personal character. Goodness is God: God is good.

The answer is altogether characteristic of the teaching of Jesus. His teaching is a revelation, the rising of the sun of truth, in a cloudless sky of doctrine, upon the soul of man. It is the duty of man to adjust his eye to the sublime vision. But Jesus is patient. He will point out the details of the revelation of God. He will adapt this or that part of truth to man's ability to see. And so He goes on to show how this light of goodness, the goodness of God, shines in the commandments. "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor thy father and mother." Yes; how patient and how tender is the Master with inquiring souls! We can imagine that the young ruler was at first almost blinded by that glory of truth in the answer of Jesus concerning "that which is good." But when his eye is fixed on some of the objects of this revelation, the command-

ments, he can see; and he thinks that he sees all that is contained in the commandments. Again we behold the manly spirit, the sincerity, the large self-respect of the young man. "Master, all these things have I observed from my youth."

Now we are ready for the lessons from this wonderful scene. A young man, manly, sincere, self-respectful, with a knowledge of goodness, and yet haunted by the fear that he does not know all that is good, staunchly doing the good that he has learnt, but still inquiring, "What lack I yet?" at once conscientious and uneasy; self-respectful, but not wholly confident—this young man in the presence of Jesus Christ. How does Jesus regard him? He stirred a peculiar feeling in the Master. Let this be the light in which we are to receive a deeper lesson still from this wonderful scene.

"And Jesus looking upon him loved him." The eye of the Lord rested gently in a steady gaze; and while He looked, the smile of love beamed from His own countenance, and fell softly upon this manly, self-respectful young man. Jesus saw something in him to love. Indeed, what the young man knew, what the young man had done, in one light was no little. He had been truthful; he had been honest; he had been chaste; he had been reverent: all these he had been from his youth. The freshness, the mental healthiness, the moral enthusiasm, the aspirations and ideals of young life, had been for him servants in the service of goodness. He was there before Jesus a young man of good name, pure habits, sincere purposes. Jesus loved him for his manly spirit. Jesus loved him for his sincerity of purpose. Jesus loved him for his self-re-

spect—for the earnest, vigorous, conscientious way in which he had applied his knowledge to doing right. For this, Jesus loved him, while all the time knowing that the young man needed to be waked up to a deeper sense of goodness, and to be taught that he was far from being perfect. He was a moral young man, whom Jesus loved for his self-respect, and yet who needed salvation from sin—the salvation that only Jesus could bring.

With all his intelligence and virtues, the young ruler did not fully understand himself. Who is there of us that has not sometime been surprised by a sudden revelation of our own hearts to ourselves? Has there never come to you such a deepening of self-knowledge? And the more you understand your own heart, has there not come a new sense of the evil that is present with you? Whatever be our ideals of goodness, whatever be our reputation among our fellow-men, whatever be our thirst for noble living, when we have honestly and thoroughly made a self-measurement, we have found something that holds us back—some hindrance, not from the outside, but from the inside, some element of self-hood, that has brought shame and pain of conscience.

Listen to Jesus Christ as He, still in love, answers the heart of this self-respectful young man. "One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." It was a flash of lightning in the young ruler's life—he saw there what had never troubled him before. It was an earthquake in his soul; and the fissures opened deep and wide, and he beheld the fires of desires that had been heating

and inciting the enterprises and habits, the tastes and judgments, the purposes and hopes of his ambitious young life. The shock was too much for him. "But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions." Honesty, truthfulness, chastity, reverence—these were his virtues; and Jesus looked in love upon the self-respect that rejoiced in them. But *covetousness*—that was his sin, down under all his virtues, heating and inciting his life. His heart was set on riches. He loved them more than he loved the Master; and when the alternative was set before him, Christ or money, his countenance fell, he went away sorrowful; no longer in self-respect, but in self-shame he clung to his possessions.

Are you ready for the deeper lesson? I beg you to hear, as it is taught by Jesus, who, looking upon a self-respectful young man, loved him. Let us never forget that look; but let us ever remember it as a smile of gratulation upon the freshness, the elasticity, the enthusiasm, the ambitions of the spirit of youth. What youth is thus far, Jesus Christ will not deny nor ignore: He will acknowledge it, and rejoice over it, and congratulate it. But if He goes on to instruct youth in its deeper needs, if He reveals the heart of youth to itself in unsuspected lights, if He shows all youth that, with its self-respect, it still needs salvation, if He plainly proves that the self-respect of youth must become religious, and be held in humility and in obedience to the will of God, shall we not still believe that He does all this in love?

But immediately we are concerned with the fact that some young men, alas! many young men, have not

lived up to the self-respect of the young ruler. There are many who could not look Jesus Christ in the face, and say sincerely, "All these commandments have I observed from my youth." There, first of all, is the sad fact that some young men have fallen very far below their own self-respect. They have lost the respect of others; and their names have become so tarnished by notorious sins that the manly spirit droops low in their lives, and shame haunts all their waking hours. They are idlers; they are drunkards; they are gamblers; they are licentious. Yes; a young man may fall this low. The downward course of sin can be run very quickly. A young man, if he is persistent in immorality, can fill a dishonored grave before he is thirty—poverty-stricken through gambling, burnt out by alcohol, rotten with licentiousness. Sometimes he may not have gone this far down. There are restraints that hold him a while from further descents—the necessity of daily labor, or the dependence of others upon him, or the pure atmosphere of a sweet home—until his self-respect can brace itself to better living. Sometimes it is the severity of temptation that leads a young man astray. It comes upon him suddenly, and assails him with Satanic power; and while he yields, there quickly come remorse and shame, a bitter and sincere repentance, the firm resolve of the unconquered will to be prudent and brave against another trial. There are such workings of a true self-respect with young men who have not yet become familiar with the paths of sin; but it is a self-respect that has its pains and tears, that feels its wounds, that is conscious of weakness and blemish, no longer now whole and untarnished. No; the moral life of that young ruler was a

remarkable one, an exceptional one in its breadth and vigor. To have told the truth, to have been honest, to have been reverent, to have been chaste—this was unusual moral strength. How many youth have attained it and maintained it? Has not sometime, perhaps more than once, the lie escaped the lips? Have there been no dishonest handlings of trusts? Has there been always the spirit of reverence toward father and mother and old age in general? Are there no bitter memories of vices that have been dallied with, and that have left a poignant sense of guilt in the soul?

Here is the first need of many young men—the need of salvation from sins about which they have no ignorance. You need forgiveness. You need the mercy of God. Your conscience tells you so. Your self-respect can not deny it. You are young, and yet you have sinned. Your sense of shame, the assertion and incitements of a self-respect that is not dead, can not take away your guilt. There it is in the past of your life, to which your conscience bears witness, and which will accuse your soul until you humbly accept the forgiveness of God in His Son Jesus Christ. O young men, you that have sinned knowingly, you that can not say with the young ruler, “All these commandments have I observed from my youth,” you need the redemption that is in Christ. You can have it freely. It will bring you peace and joy. It will purify and invigorate all the capacities and powers of your youth. It will enlarge your ideals. It will broaden your sympathies. It will make you manlier still. It will make you wise and strong in the day of trial. It will teach you how much grander holiness is than innocence. It will

consecrate you, with all that youth still gives of ardor, quickness, elasticity, to the formation of a spiritual character in Christ Jesus.

There may be some, however, who can be classed with the young ruler. They have told the truth; they have been honest; they have been reverent; they have been chaste. They may say sincerely, "All these commandments have I observed from my youth: what lack I yet?" The look of Jesus is on them, full of love; and it is in love that He will go on to show truthful, honest, reverent, chaste young men that they, too, have deeper moral needs; that they, too, must be saved from sin, and let their vital self-respect be clarified and purified, and made thoroughly religious. The look of Jesus penetrates the heart, and reveals all its inward workings—its hidden springs, its secret motives, its subtle seductions. Here is the fullness of self-judgment for every man: his *heart*—what is there; and what he sees there not only in the light of his conscience, but in the light of the candle of the Lord. I hear persons saying with great self-assurance, "My heart is all right; if I have done wrong, it was an error of the head, not of the heart; if I know my heart"—ah, yes, *if* you know your heart! But the knowledge of the heart is a life-time study. No one can understand his own heart without profound self-examination. The Bible speaks of "hidden faults"—faults away down in the heart; in the depths of one's natures, tendencies to sin, veiled motives of action, blind self-excusing—faults hidden from the eyes of our fellow-men, hidden from our own eyes, open only before God. It is in view of this awful danger that we hear one of the Bible prayers—"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my

thoughts, and see if there be any way of wickedness in me."

That was the trouble of the young ruler: he did not know his own heart. He needed to be revealed to himself. Below his truthfulness, his honesty, his reverence, below his chastity, there was in his heart a sin against God and against the highest good of the soul. That sin was covetousness—a sin that the Bible distinctly calls "idolatry." He loved money. Do we all fully understand what that sin is? Does it seem strange that a man can tell no lie, and cheat no one, and yet worship money as a god? It is not a strange fact. It is occurring every day. But do we appreciate how subtle is the sin of covetousness, that it can blind the heart of even a truth-telling, honest-dealing, clean-bodied man? It can make such a one feel proudly independent of his fellow-men. It can make him feel selfishly secure against poverty and want. It can lead him to a selfish indulgence in innocent pleasures; or it can allure him to double and treble his capital, with no thought nor purpose beyond this piling of dollars upon dollars. It can deceive him with the self-congratulation that he is charitable and generous, when in comparison with some of the offerings of God's poor, he is giving only pittance out of his superfluity. "Covetousness, the which is idolatry"—so sounds the solemn note of God's Word. This idolatry of money is blinding truthful, honest, chaste men of this generation. Sometimes a crisis comes in such a man's life—some long sickness, some unforeseen business disaster, some wrenching bereavement—and for the first time he is revealed to himself: he sees how his heart has been set on money above everything else. The shock, in

some way, of God's judgment breaks up the man's life ; and down below his morality and self-respect he sees that he has been blindly worshipping " Mammon."

That hidden sin had a terrible hold upon the young ruler's life. Jesus saw that ; and Jesus, therefore, was severely plain and purposely severe in the alternative that He set before the young man's choice. Treasure on earth, or treasure in Heaven—he must choose one or the other. Jesus saw that his trust in riches was so supreme that nothing short of a complete forsaking them could release his soul to the pursuit of a spiritual life. The result showed how covetous the young man was. One moment bright, happy, with eager inquiry concerning goodness, congratulated by Jesus on his morality and self-respect ; the next moment, with spiritual life indeed offered to him, companionship with Jesus, training under Jesus, the highest good of his own soul in doing untold good to others, then the lightning of self-revelation flashed, the shock of self-hood was painfully felt, the hidden sin of his heart was seen—his countenance fell, and he went sorrowfully away, " for he was one that had great possessions."

Let young men think on all this. It is a luminous lesson how that, under the morality and self-respect of youth, there may be hidden sins. A man may be truthful, and yet narrowly proud ; honest, and yet supremely selfish ; chaste, and yet cold and unsympathetic. Test yourselves in the light of the look and teaching of Jesus Christ. If the spirit of your youth has no tarnish of lie, nor theft, nor sensuality, there is place for the gratulation of self-respect. Jesus's look of love allows all that. He would not diminish your self-respect one whit. But let His look of love, and

His words of love, now go down into your heart, and search that deeper region of life. What is there? Be honest and truthful with yourself in this thorough self-examination. Do you find any self-sufficient pride there? Do you feel any flatterings of vanity? Do you detect any feelings of envy or jealousy? Do you harbor any malice toward some cutting critic of your person or manner? Have you never felt harsh nor unkind toward some unwitting mistake of a friend? Have you never been troubled by the stir of an evil passion? If you have never slandered your fellow-men, have you never misjudged them nor cherished ungrounded dislikes for them? If you have always been chaste in body, have you always been chaste in thought and imagination? Is your heart set on anything of this world—money, fame, pleasure, friendship—that you would rather have to enjoy than the will of God, if it pointed in a different direction? If Jesus Christ were to test you to-night as regards some hidden desire or affection, saying, "Choose me or that," what would be your choice? Would your countenance fall, and would you go sorrowfully away?

Young men, test yourselves by these questions. See just where you stand as regards the condition of your souls. If your youth has been already stained by sins of the flesh, if your conscience must honestly declare, "No; I have not observed all these commandments," do you not feel your need of cleansing? And if you measure your life thus far right along with the life of that young ruler, still are there not sins of the heart that you begin plainly to perceive? Here is what you all need—the redemption that is offered in the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and that means not only

redemption from sin, but redemption unto holiness; yes; it means not only the forgiveness of past sins, but it means necessarily the beginning of a religious character. This is the hope and joy of all young life—that it be sincerely and beautifully religious. It is the ideal held up in the Word of God. “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth”—I ask you, is not this a thrilling congratulation, from the very heart of God? But there is another note to be heard. “Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” These two together—for a young man to rejoice in his youth, with its vigor of body, its eagerness of mind, its elasticity of spirit, its enthusiasms, its ambitions, its ideals, its capacities, its advantages, its opportunities; and then all the time to hold and use these in obedience to God. Let us never forget that look of Jesus’s love upon the self-respect of a young man. It meant a great deal; and let us make of it all that Jesus meant. Let it thrill your hearts to-night; and then listen, I beg you, listen also to the commandment of Jesus that this fresh, glad, active, hopeful spirit of youth be enlightened, and purified from all sin, and turned to a powerful influence in religious character.

SERMON XII.

POSSESSION AND PRACTICE
OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

XII.

THE POSSESSION AND PRACTICE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."—*Matt. v. 6.*

"He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."
—*I. John iii. 7.*

Christ not only brings help to all of our wants, but He first gives to us the true expression of our wants. Under the impulse of the Gospel the dumb heart becomes articulate with an intelligent cry. The want may still be unsatisfied, but man sees the satisfaction, and longs for it knowingly. His hunger is painful, his thirst intense; but he hungers and thirsts after righteousness. Here is the secret of the first power of Christ on man. It is true of all of us that we are first revealed to ourselves by the companionable touch of some stronger nature. In some happy hour the word is spoken, or a deed is seen, or an influence flows out, and we are revealed to ourselves in the valuable self-knowledge of what we really need. Then the hunger begins, and the thirst—painful hunger and intense thirst; but the bread and the water are ready, and we have only to eat and drink in order to live. Jesus Christ wakes men up to understand what they are, and to see what they may be, and awakens them by the touch of His own nature on theirs. In all the

distinctive precepts of that sermon on the mountain, in all luminous contrasts between the old-time doctrine and the new, in all authoritative sanctions and admonitions, there was the subtle power of a life pervading the listening multitude, and stirring sleeping consciences, and unlocking fettered hearts. In such vitality lay the special power of the discourse—a power not so much of originality of truth, as of original direction and application of truth, not so much of a new doctrine, as a new spirit of doctrine, not so much of unheard-of precepts, as of an impressive authority in commanding. No wonder the “Beatitudes” have such a volume of meaning. Self-revelation, vitality, authority, are all wrapt up in them, and give them their power of blessing to men. The life that was in the speaker was the secret of the power of His speech. All this we must keep in mind, if we wish to understand every precept and every promise of Jesus Christ. The blessing of those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness,” its secret, too, is the secret of self-revelation, of abundant vitality, and supreme authority.

Righteousness! It is one of the master-words of the Bible. Its occurrences and uses are immensely varied. Sometimes it has a plain, every-day ring of duty about it, and you think that you can easily catch all its signification; and then again it swells with the harmonies of some prophetic strain or apocalyptic song, of which the human mind stands in awe. You now look upon it in the simple light of some homely precept, when, behold! it loses itself in the “finer light in light” of an exceeding great promise. A certain passage seems to give it the clear outline of a

worldly morality, and then another verse swallows it in the depths of mystery. It is one of the master-words of the Bible because it is one of the deepest needs, one of the deepest experiences of life. The Bible has to talk about it in this manifold way because it has just such a history in the lives of men. The verbal contradictions must appear as the Word of God faithfully depicts its character and course in the redemption and development of humanity. We hear the Master warning His disciples, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven;" and then in variant language one of His Apostles utters the disclaimer, "not having a righteousness of mine own." The same Apostle looks for our salvation "not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves;" while the Master looking for the doing of righteousness, warns us as to the motive, "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them."

The word thus has a deep interest of thought and life. All these variant uses, its specially manifold significance with Paul, are not just so much verbal fencing nor dialectical refining. No; the word represents a deep and complex experience of human nature, and of human nature as handled by the purposes and power of Christ's redemption. Language, even the language of inspiration, may fail to set forth in logical forms all this deep experience of your life; but the language of the New Testament, especially of Paul's Epistles, is there in the attempt to express the meaning; and it is intellectual cowardice to ignore the doctrine, or intellectual caprice to appropriate only part of it to tally

with our partisan views. Sometimes you hear an humble-hearted disciple, in sincere fervor, bemoaning his sins, and disowning any righteousness of his own, sincerely and fervently claiming Christ for his righteousness. More than once has a man of high culture heard such a prayer, and the thought is an offense to him, and he feels rather like exhorting his fellow-man to "follow after righteousness." It is a significant lesson that in one religious gathering such a prayer is frequently heard, and such praying far oftener than such exhortation; while in another, such exhortation is the exclusive tone, and such a prayer is never uttered. There is a caricature in one place, a defect in the other. There is a unity of truth lying back of both the prayer and the exhortation. But we must take time this morning, if we wish to know the teaching of God's Word concerning righteousness. The doctrine is there. It may lie there in complicated forms, needing discrimination, a stumbling-block to zealots, and foolishness to wiseacres.

But indeed it is a truth of our every experience, a true description of what each one of us is undergoing at some stage, if we hunger and thirst after righteousness. You hunger and thirst, and Christ fills you; you are blessed beyond doubt. About all this sweet, real experience the Bible has so much to say, because it means so much. Let us search the Scriptures thereon, and let us know what they teach concerning righteousness in possession and practice. To have righteousness, not fictitiously, but really, so that it satisfies all the hunger of our hearts; and to do right, as God would have us practice it, and as our fellow-men can see it and judge it—this is our eager study to-day.

Let us begin with the fullest passage of the New Testament. We find it in Paul's Epistle to the Philippians—a passage describing a vital experience; a description involving a nice discrimination of words, but warm throughout with the blood of a throbbing life. The contrast is again up with the Apostle between Judaism and Christianity. He looks on Christians as the true circumcision, “who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” This “confidence in the flesh”—here is the first discriminative touch. Paul could have claimed such a right. He looks back, and sees that all the rights and honors of Judaism were his pre-eminently. Not only was he “circumcised the eighth day,” but “of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews.” In lineage and blood his boast was high. When it came to his standing in “the law,” he was pronouncedly a Pharisee—not the Pharisee of extortion and hypocrisy whom Christ denounced, but Joseph-like, Nicodemus-like, like his master Gamaliel. Nay, “as touching the righteousness which is in the law found blameless.” He means the righteousness of a restricted kind. His fasts, his washings, his prayers, his tithes, his cleanness of hands and name, his zeal for conscience' sake—on these he could have counted as undisputed gains. But now for some reason he flings them all away. He is content to lose them in order to gain Christ. He stops at no limitations. “Yea, verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteous-

ness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

What does it mean, this contrast between a righteousness one's own and a righteousness "which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith?" Is it simply the strained language of a Jewish dialectician? Is Paul indulging unconsciously in a rabbinical habit of mind? Is the apt pupil of Gamaliel fettering the abundant vitality of the Gospel in a logical form? Is there any deep experience back of these verbal contrasts to justify them, to more than justify them, as they can but hint at the deep underlying reality?

Before you begin to study the opinions and explanations of theological schools on the Pauline idea of righteousness, the best way to understand it is to begin right with yourself, to make a study of yourself with all your moral needs. That you can do, if you are thoroughly honest. And now what do you find? Let the answers be given just as far as possible in the language of every-day life, as far as possible without the phraseology of any particular philosophy, agnostic, eclectic, or transcendental. You have the honest desire to be good and to do right. We need not stop to study the origin nor the meaning of such a desire. You have it strong enough to be also with you an unfeigned purpose. All that is meant by hating the lie and loving the truth; keeping one's self pure; dealing honestly with one's fellow-man; helping the needy as one can; craving the knowledge that one has shirked no duty and left undone nothing that ought to be done—a good conscience, an unsullied character, a praise-

worthy name—all this, we will say, is your strong desire and unfeigned purpose. Oh! it is so much for one to have such a desire and purpose. A great many have it not—the multitude whose “sins are evident, going before unto judgment.” Many others hardly make a purpose of their desire to be good; even their desire is weak and fitful. But let us suppose (the supposition is not improbable) that there are some with whom right-doing is a passion, who make it a study and drive hard at it in practice, and that you are one of these. You have your high ideal of goodness, and towards it you are striving. It has grown upon you from the sweet companionships of the household; from the warm fellowship of living friends; from the sad, far-off memories of your dead; from the records of great names in history. Nay, there is one Name of history which you reverence and love. You may be unable to repeat the Church’s creed concerning that Name; but as you turn the pages that tell of that life, you can but confess it altogether lovely, the one perfect Example of goodness of which men can not reasonably doubt. There are truth, and purity, and kindness, and beauty, no longer in mere didactic deliverances, but in blood and breath and look and touch, life in moral perfection.

Now remember I am supposing that such an ideal is a passion with you, an active desire and purpose which is more to you than mother or father or wife or houses or lands or fame. What comes of it? Why, with all your striving, you fail to attain it. You come very far short of it. It rises to infinite heights above you, and out of your depths of failure you look to it and long for it in vain. Why? For the plainest reason in the

world. It is because something is holding you back. There is no room for skepticism here. The trouble is with you. Give it what name you please, wickedness, depravity, sin ; make what philosophy of it you may—there is something in you that holds you back. And then comes a bitterness of feeling, a sense of wretchedness, pain and suffering within. Such is the experience of every man with his ideals and hard strivings and inevitable failures. So true is that last part of the seventh chapter of Romans. It comes home to all of us as we endeavor by ourselves to attain unto righteousness. “To will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not.” This is the sad, solemn fact of the result of our high purposes of goodness. And will you hear Paul’s explanation of the failure? “I find then the law, that, to me who would do good, evil is present.” That is what the hindrance is called. And here is the whole matter in a nutshell: “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members.” The conclusion is inevitable. In sight of the ideal of goodness, willing that which is right, striving for moral completeness in ourselves, we miss it always; and such self-knowledge, if neither the world nor business nor pleasure nor pride hides us from it, will cause the bitter cry, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?”

If this be the experience of every such purposeful man, it is then no dry dogmatic teaching that we find on the subject in the third chapter of Romans. There is simply the record of the undeniable fact—“all have

sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." The speaking of the law of God is but a clearer and stronger enforcement of the conscience of man. Man's ideal, looked at by itself, is but his best conception of this perfect law which is the habitant of God's throne ; and his ideal rebukes him for falling so short. Certainly "every mouth is stopped." Certainly "all the world" is "brought under the judgment of God." Certainly "by works of law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Paul's own righteousness did not satisfy him. Neither will your own righteousness satisfy you. What that is, the difference between it and other righteousness, why each, being different, so gets its characterization, will appear before I have done.

Let us, therefore go down into a deeper depth of the subject. Here is a large and luminous Scripture. "But now apart from the law, a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by his blood, to show his righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus."

We have not time, indeed, to-day for all that is in this meaty passage. But we can get out of it enough food to satisfy certain strong cravings of the mind.

"The righteousness of God"—that is the first thought. A righteousness infinite with His being, strong with His almightiness, perfect with His character, has its revelation. Concerning it the law teaches. Of it the prophets sing. But there is need of such a manifestation profounder than the law taught, sublimer than the prophets sang. It is revealed in the Incarnation and Sacrifice of His Son. In the Gospel is the righteousness of God now revealed. But the Gospel speaks of facts that were a stumbling-block to some, foolishness to others. It speaks of service, and sacrifice, and suffering, and death. Here is where the human mind has wondered most, and pondered longest, and where the schools of theology have made a battle-field of theories and shibboleths. Why that incarnation and death to reveal that righteousness? What is the secret of the power of that righteousness in such an obedience "even unto death, yea, the death of the cross," to ease man of sin and to move him to a better life? No theory has fathomed its depths. The "commercial" theory of Christ's reconciliation is well-nigh forgotten in its frigid and mechanical formulæ. The "governmental" theory is fast losing its hold as the modern mind is fast learning to undo the habit of judging the ways of God by the ways, the artificial ways, of man. The "moral-influence" theory, attractive, suggestive, humane, we are all beginning to feel does not touch bottom. "The sins done aforetime"—that is, before Christ came—God's passing over these forbearingly—His setting forth His Son as a "propitiation" or "mercy-seat," to "show his righteousness" for such forbearance—here verily is an infinite depth of the righteousness of God revealed in the obedience

and death of the Son of His love. Why should it be thought strange that no school of theology, not even the sound words of the Bible itself, have measured the wealth of light and love here so gloriously and graciously manifested?

And this backward look of the death of Christ has just as much significance "at this present season," in the case of every one, indeed, who seeks Christ for salvation from sin. It is just an awful, undeniable fact in the lives of each one of us—this disturbance of heart because of a guilty past. Perhaps our forefathers overdid the matter in preaching the relief from this trouble as the whole of the forgiveness of sins, to the neglect of urging a necessary betterment of life. But surely the language of the New Testament has no meaning, if therein is not preached, "beginning at Jerusalem," the "remission of sins" in the name of Jesus Christ, if the sweetness of fellowship with Him, the "redemption" that is in Him, has not its first warmth of synonym in the "forgiveness of our sins," as meaning necessarily the taking away of our past sins in the sacrifice and suffering of God's Son. The tendency now is away from this first of the two great uppermost thoughts of the New Testament. But this thought, this doctrine, this promise makes itself blessedly felt with every one who will receive it in the humility of obedience to Christ. Somehow, yes, somehow, this righteousness of God, taught in the law, sung of by the prophets, but now revealed in the death of His Son, as it flings its influence over the "sins done aforetime," and illumines the Godward side of the revelation, whose light is yet too strong for man—the righteousness of God, shining in your heart and my heart

as we turn to it by faith, gives us peace of conscience from sins past; and in such shining God is "just" or "righteous," and "the justifier of him," or "accounts him righteous," really, not fictitiously righteous, "that hath faith in Jesus."

Again let us go to the Book of the Acts, and mark how the great salvation of the Gospel is livingly a salvation of men in righteousness—a righteousness not their own, but the righteousness of God in Christ, "the righteousness which is of God upon faith." In and out among the inhabitants of the earth, to the pressing crowd and to the wayfaring pilgrim, to highly moral men and to blackened sinners, in the quietness of a personal chat, in the storm of hissing enemies, to hungry hearts and to scoffing heads, the Gospel is preached—the free, living Gospel wherein, without formula, without definition, without a rigid and frigid system, "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith unto faith." It met the hunger and thirst of mankind. They were filled with the first blessedness of salvation—the deliverance, purely through mercy, without anything to commend them, entirely by favor, from the sins of the past. The mercy superabundant—"to the whole creation;" the promise undeniably clear—"he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"—"repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins"—no wonder the Gospel propelled its influence far and wide over that Pagan world. It was the gift of life through Jesus Christ—abundant, superabounding life—to a world whose moral vitality had gone down to zero. The regeneration of mankind had begun. Because man is what he is in the unity of his life, what Jesus

did for him must first affect what was behind. That influence of the Gospel on the past, necessarily included and preached in the sound words "forgiveness," "remission," "justification," made itself felt because man needed the influence.

Oh! how richly and variedly the Christian may speak of this life of righteousness, not his own, but Christ's, become his possession in a real experience of heart and character! A blessing has come to us which we all confess that we sorely need, need most of all blessings. It came without any search on our part, without any thought of ours; without any provision or prevision of our own. It is the gift, the mercy, the favor, the love of God, making up for all our loss, supplying all our lack, satisfying all our desires. Deny this deep, awful need of man, and you simply butt your head against a stern fact of life. Try to meet it otherwise than by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and men will at last reject your chaff. The fact—the fact of man's moral need, the fact of the Gospel's meeting it—is the most undeniable fact of history. Till a better explanation of it comes, as the mind seeks instinctively for phrases, formulæ, verbal settings, let us turn to the Sacred Writings, and repeat "the pattern of sound words," no longer dry and cold and barren, but warm and vital and meaningful to him who believes that in the end life and thought are one, worthy indeed of the power and passion of music as it floats over a great congregation in some cathedral gloom, or becomes simply melodious in one believer's heart—"not for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies"—"who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"—"him who knew no

sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him"—"not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us"—"not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"—"we through the Spirit by faith wait for the hope of righteousness." Such language is true to life, at one with our needs, at one with their supply, the illumination of the height and length and breadth and depth of that *magnificat* of the believer's heart, as he views his redemption, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

This is the beginning of the fulfillment of the promise to hungry and thirsting souls. I do not believe that any other beginning will ever satisfy you, if you are so hungry. On the contrary, with many who gaze towards the ideal of righteousness and are ever striving towards it, I see dissatisfaction and wonderment and sadness. The eyes of intelligence are often nowadays turned upon Jesus Christ, and in them one can read the light of no little appreciation of what He did and said, but it does not soften into a look of peace and content. We shall not hear the tender voice of gratitude repeating with Simeon, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." All else in the Nazarene that makes for the perfect life is seen and admired—the purity, the mildness, the sweet reasonableness, the self-sacrificingness; but at the rest there is doubt and distrust. The land-marks of Bethlehem—the Incarnation; of Calvary—the Reconciliation; of Pentecost—the authoritative Evangel—are openly disbelieved or

silently ignored. And therefore, when hungry hearts seek for righteousness, the sight of the beauty of Christ's character and manner does not satisfy the hunger; and so with all such professions of admiration and persuasive commendation, with all who admire and gaze intently at the historic ideal, there is still unrest and failing of heart, and painful askance of thought, and at last the inevitable drift to a sort of melancholic carelessness and mere æsthetic ease.

No; Christ's promise of righteousness to hungry hearts must begin with our first want, the forgiveness of past sins, the remission of present sins, the "free gift," the "gift of the grace of the one man;" we must first "receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness." This first uppermost thought of the Gospel I preach to you again this morning, faithfully and plainly. "Christ and Him crucified," the old Pauline standard—here He is, openly set forth before you. I preach Him in His life and death, in His perfect obedience, to meet the wants of your soul. Those wants are there, be sure; and they are but intensified when they fasten on Christ, but stop short of the cross to which He was nailed for our behoof. Your culture will only make you all the sadder and more despairful, if it refuses the simple mercy of God to take away your sins in the sacrifice of the Son of His love.

Now come the positive lessons of righteousness in practice. There is no break nor leap here in the Word of truth. This gift of righteousness God means to be to every man the mightiest obligation to a life of righteousness. The critical mind may study, classify, discriminate the uses of this master-word, whether it

refers to the first simple touch of God's healing a sinful heart, or to the final fruits that enrich a believer's life. But the Gospel itself uses the word freely, fluently, livingly, always in contact with life at some point. It never once lets go its idea of influencing man for certain moral good. It distinctively teaches that the very remission of our sins involves a newness of living and doing. The idea of the freeness of this salvation had already begun to be perverted in Paul's day. "If grace overflows sin," so the loose notion was floating in some minds, "let us sin on, that grace may abound more and more exceedingly." The very fact of such a perverse notion shows the liability of the doctrine to such a perversion. We are saved according to mercy, without any reference to moral measurements of our own. But the New Testament teaches that, while the gift of righteousness is just so free, its true tendency must be to make us better in life. "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid." That is Paul's solemn negation. And then, speaking of the great historic act, our obedience in baptism, where the salvation of the penitent believer is beautifully and really represented, out of that obedience and with that blessing the Apostle finds a moral newness of life necessarily following. "Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life."

There is no covert here for either ignorance or hypocrisy. The might of moral obligation loses none of its

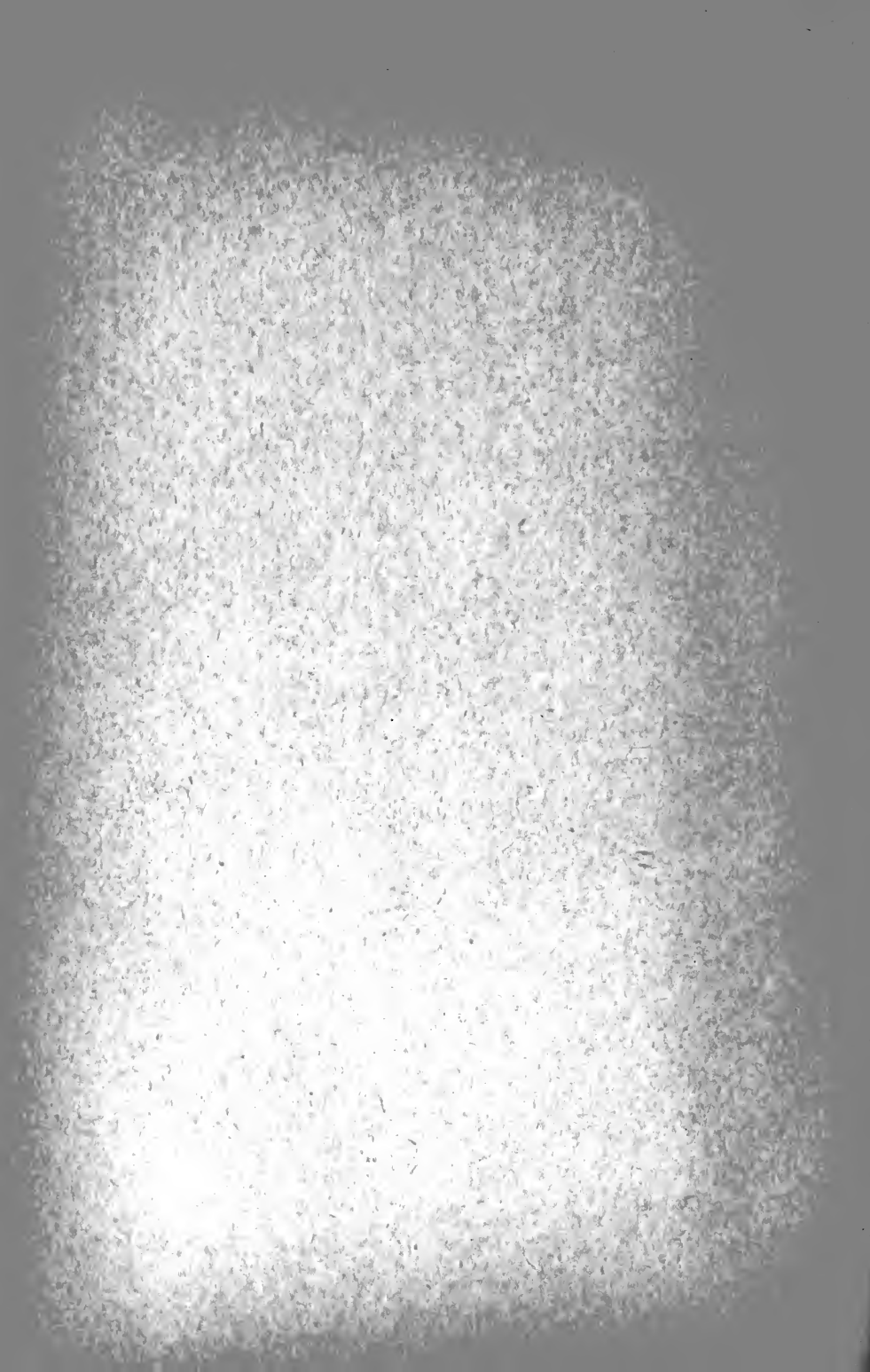
intensity in the mercifulness of the Gospel. The mercy of the Gospel but reënforces its intensity. No sinner has felt aright the healing hand of the Saviour, who does not arise from the waters of baptism with regnant motives to lead a new life. So vital is this double idea of the righteousness of God, its power to cleanse and its purpose to better men's lives, its revelation of the justice of God's ways and of an ideal for man's pursuit, its mercy in setting men right towards a wrong past, and setting them onward to a holy future, that the New Testament fairly revels in the luxuriance of its teaching, its precepts, its pictures, its promises of this pervasive thought. It simply asks of us to hold this variant doctrine, this manifold usage, in the unity of an intelligent grasp. And so holding it we may see its vast meaning unfold, and cover the wide range of life and duty.

Mark its urgent "therefore," filled with all the power and purpose of redemption—"let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body!" Listen to its immense motive of gratitude taught former hardened sinners, the thief, the drunkard, the libertine—"such were some of you; but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God." See the far-sighted moral design of the very sacrificial death of Jesus Christ—"who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, having died unto sin, might live unto righteousness." Do you need insistence of precept as regards your passions? "Flee youthful lusts; but follow after righteousness!" Do you want all moral defense against the inroads of the world? "By the armor of righteousness on the

right hand and on the left." Do you wish a live, loud word about your companionships? "What fellowship have righteousness and iniquity?" Would you have a decisive test of your motives in your good works? "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them." Do you want some first gleam of light, some first soft touch of easing, as you suffer the pangs of a long, sharp discipline, where even human love fails, and you begin your walk under the heavy shadows? "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness." Do you in these times of sad carelessness or morbid questionings about death and a hereafter, long for a luminous hope that flings its light towards the low dark verge of life, through the grave, over the land beyond? "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day."

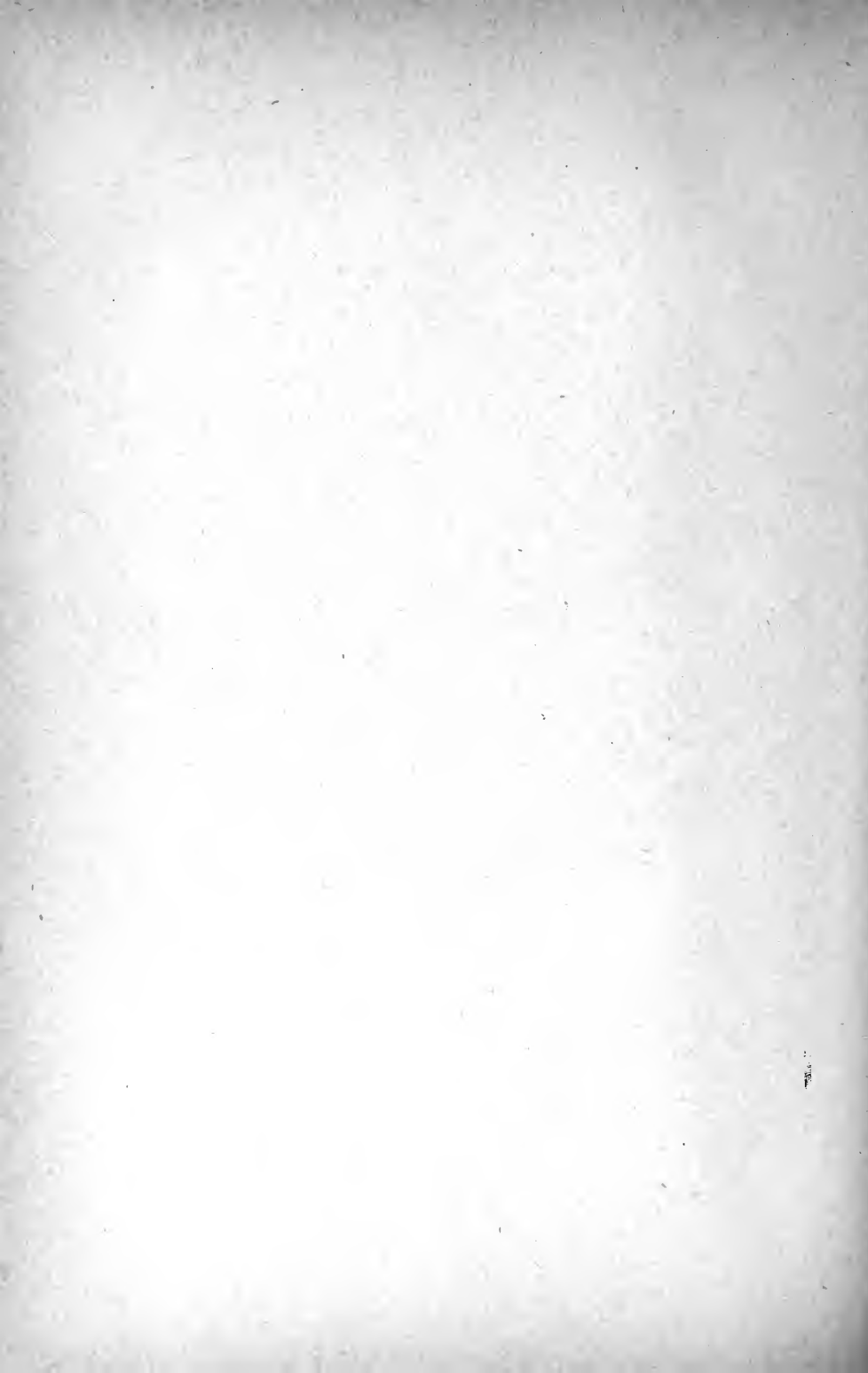
Righteousness! Do you hunger for it? Do you feel your need of it? Deep down in your heart, do you want to be right and do right? Are you tired of sinning, and sorry for your sins, and longing to be saved from all sin? Here is righteousness—the righteousness of God—revealed in the life and sacrifice of the Son of His love, a redemption from sin for all of God's creatures, a righteousness for you and me to possess really in heart, and to practice daily in duty. It is God's own gift for our peace, our strength, our hope evermore. It is ours in the self-renuncements of our faith. It is ours in the humble, prayerful energies of our obedience. It is.

ours, in the grace of God, in the Cross of Christ, for self-denying possession, for self-denying practice, which lifts its banner, and exultantly sings, "The Lord our righteousness!"



SERMON XIII.

CRISES OF DECISION IN
CONVERSION.



XIII.

CRISES OF DECISION IN CONVERSION.

"And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation."—*Acts ii. 40.*

Peter had preached the Gospel. The sword of the Spirit had pierced the heart of the vast audience as the heart of one man. The penitent cry had rent the air, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter had sounded the note of duty, and had revealed the promise of salvation—"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." He had declared the world-wide light and love of the promise—"For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him."

But Peter was not through with his sermon. "With many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation." Although he beheld hundreds and hundreds, a surging crowd, convicted of sin; although he decisively declared the Way of salvation,—still he preached on; with many other words he went on testifying; he went on exhorting them to be saved. Can we doubt what those "many other words" were, words of testimony and words of exhortation? He must have quoted more prophecies; he must have appealed to more facts.

Those Jews knew what had been written aforetime of the Messiah; they knew what had been done by Jesus of Nazareth in their midst, the mighty works and wonders and signs. The Apostle, inspired, impelled, borne along by the Spirit, poured out testimony after testimony, and poured down exhortation after exhortation, upon the hearts and consciences of convicted, inquiring sinners who had been enlightened concerning salvation by a crucified and risen Saviour.

It was necessary. It was no superfluous work. There was a crisis in the lives of men. The acceptable year of the Lord had begun with them. The day of salvation had dawned upon them. They saw it; they knew it. But now what would come of all this? Peter necessarily went on testifying and exhorting. Men may be convinced and convicted, deeply convicted, of sin, and yet not be saved. There may come a terrible conflict at the last whether they will give up anything and everything for Christ. A thousand excuses, a thousand allurements, will come pressing and playing upon their hearts, to hold them back from obeying the Gospel. There were many Jews in that huge mass who were undergoing just that tremendous trial, while they now tremblingly believed that Jesus of Nazareth whom they had wickedly crucified, God had raised from the dead, and exalted to be both Lord and Christ. As Peter went on testifying and exhorting, they felt it was a crisis of decision. They had to fight with their personal pride. They felt the awful shame of their nation's guilt. They knew that they would be deciding for to-morrow as well as to-day. They saw there would come inevitably a breach with friendships and kinships, while they could not see all

the trouble that the new, strange future would bring forth. The age was against them in a cyclone of threats and perils. Here Peter spoke and pressed the last word—their real danger, the final break that had to be made—“Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”

It was after all this testimony and exhortation, so many burning words from inspired lips, that the complete surrender of the will was made. “They then that received his word were baptized.” It was the full obedience of faith, on their part—a very glory of the Gospel’s power, a mighty victory of numbers, “in that day three thousand souls.”

The same need exists now. Is it not true in the case of some of you this very hour? You have felt the guilt of your sins; you have learned the Way of salvation, and still you hesitate to obey the Gospel. It is not a question of light. You see your own condition, and you do not deny it; nay, you feel your need of forgiveness with God; and you can not say that you are ignorant of the Gospel’s plain precepts and promises. The crisis with you is the crisis of decision—whether you will walk in the light, whether you will act upon your convictions, whether you will be baptized in a heartiness of repentance and faith. The trouble is the trouble of outside influences, as these play upon one, and weaken one’s will. We are becoming used to that word environment, and we see how it aptly describes one’s life about him, the things outside of him and around him that yet go so far to determine what one will be and what one will do. The spirit of the age, the atmosphere of a family, the customs of society, the tastes of a clique, the demands

of a calling, the settled tendencies of individual habits—all these make a very network of influences that wind over and in a man's character, until when some mighty voice of duty sounds in his ear, and reverberates in his conscience, summoning him to a new and better life, he needs to hear over and over the particular note, "Save yourself from your generation;" and very often the voice must be more particular and persistent still, "Save yourself from yourself."

Let us see. There may be some one special influence of this kind from which one and another needs to be saved in the full redemption of the Gospel. I want to speak chiefly of two powers, characteristic of this generation, which many find that they must break away from, as the Spirit of God convicts them of sin and enlightens them concerning salvation.

I. Many need *to be saved from certain influences of social pleasures*. Does that sound like a familiar note of the pulpit? Are you led to expect a tirade against the follies of fashion and the frivolities of society? It is easy enough to indulge in that. But it may be a very cheap performance, without either sweetness or light, unreasonable, uninstructional, unhelpful, a blind purchase of applause after all, when the preacher thinks that he is discharging a high duty of conscience in the sight of God and the people. No; there never was a time in the history of young lives when preacher and people so much needed to say, "Come, let us reason together concerning pleasures and amusements." The Church must consider the subject, and speak of it, in united love and wisdom. We are exhorting young men and women to be saved. Very often they reach the point of conviction, in seriousness, if not in penitence and

tears; and they hear the exhortation to leave off this custom of amusement, to forsake that habit of pleasure, if they would be saved. And the battle begins, a conflict with one's generation and with one's self—questions of casuistry, assertions of self-will, while all the time conscience strongly protests that salvation is needed. "Must I give up the dance, to be a Christian?" says a bright-faced girl. "Is attendance at the theater incompatible with a Christian profession?" asks a high-spirited collegian.

I beg you to begin back farther than that. Salvation is too large, too serious, too grand a question, to be debated or settled at this or that point of worldly diversion. If there is any hunger or cry of your heart for eternal life, you must come down to the whole subject of amusements, indeed to every earthly way or doing, from a lofty plane of light and duty. I believe that you can do it—every one of you young people. It is the dictate of both faith and reason, showing you what you are, what God made you for, and why Christ died to redeem you. As you see and appreciate all this, you will say that I am right in exhorting you to be saved from certain influences of social pleasures of this generation.

Listen. I want to impress you here with two facts. There is no salvation for a man or woman whose life is a life of worldly amusement. You can not have the salvation of the Gospel, and run every day of the month, and every month of the year, in a round of fashionable jollity. For any one to live thus in pleasure, is to be dead while he lives. A true life, in the light of the Gospel of Christ, can not be a holiday of fun and merry-making. The first fact for a Christian to

accept and act upon in regard to amusements, is that amusement ought to be not the rule, but the exception, of his life. Did I say a Christian? I mean a Christian, as I mean also every rational being. God made lambs and kittens and children to play; yet even in the frolic of children He is training their faculties of body and mind for work. Industry; industry of reason; industry that expresses purpose and embodies good; regular, wise industry—this is the truth and health of a rational life. When a man lives in this right way, amusement becomes to him, indeed, recreation. He chooses it; he enters into it heartily; he richly enjoys it; he is re-created, made over, a healthy, happy, thoughtful man, ready and eager for labor and toil. If there is a sin that you may pray to be saved from, it is the sin of idleness as a daily, lifetime habit—whether coarse idleness or æsthetic idleness, whether the idleness of a barroom loafer, or a fashionable beau, or a frivolous belle.

I am sure that many of our young people—and some old people—need this special salvation in the salvation of the Gospel. They need to be saved from idle, fruitless lives, first of all. Their lives lack reason, lack intellectual dignity, lack worthy occupation and action. It is not primarily a question of cards or dances. It is the awful danger of absorption in social gayeties—a perilous strain of body and mind in the giddy round, and then a complete exhaustion of every faculty, no day of thought or work. The multiplicity and high fever of these exciting pleasures to-day blind young men and young women to the true life of the spirit in Jesus Christ. Right there you need the exhortation, "Save yourself from this generation."

Does not a pause sometimes come? Have you not heard the still, small voice of a better, more useful, a really happier life, calling you? Have you not acknowledged to yourself the emptiness of the so-called life of pleasure, its dry rot in your character, even while its soft airs and alluring voices detained you from your duty to your Lord and Saviour? I beg you, heed the Gospel's call, "Save yourself from yourself"—make the break there—turn around in all honesty and courage, prepared to live as you and I and every other child of God ought to live; and then you will easily settle how and when you may be amused. It will then be a very unwise, sympathetic church that can not forbearingly teach and guide its young disciples aright, with fewer and fewer mistakes, concerning social amusements.

2. Many need to be saved from certain influences of *industrial occupations*. The picture is wholly different. It is not the ball-room, but the store, the shop, the farm, the railway. It is the totality of the great modern industrial world, with its hum of machinery, its busy pens, its rapid transits of grains and goods, its bargains and sales, its making money and its building a material civilization. You are not an idler, but a busy man. You almost have no taste nor time for amusement. You rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of toil. The lines of anxiety are upon your face, the sign of heavier anxieties daily burdening your mind and heart. Your hindrance as regards salvation, is not the pleasures of the world. It is a hindrance of an altogether different kind. It is the cares of this world that occupy you, and hold you back from your salvation.

Believe me, there is a way of right reason here, if only you will see it. You want to see that you can be a Christian and business man at the same time. The Word of God puts no embargo on toil of hand nor responsibility of brain. There is a Gospel of industry, according to Paul. It speaks on this wise: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good." It gives no quarter to the idler and the tramp. "Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." It distils the quintessence of all political economy, the secret of an industrial civilization—"If any will not work, neither let him eat."

What a lesson for any business man who lets his business come between him and salvation! It need not be so. If it does, where the fault lies is plain enough to be seen. The thirst for riches, making haste to be rich, money-making as a fever, no time for anything else—no time for church, no time for home, no time to read the Bible, no time to pray—as these habits fetter a man, he needs to hear the thunders of warnings from God's Word. "The love of money is a root of all evil." "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God." "The cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." The warnings are not a bit too loud nor often to arouse and convict men in their worship of the god of this world. And what makes them so reasonable while so terrible, is that they are meant to open one's eyes to the noble ideal of earthly prosperity and spiritual character possible in

every man's life. So the Apostle John taught Gaius while he prayed for him—"Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." There is the truth for you, the positive, rational, beautiful truth, as the Gospel teaches and exhorts you to be saved. To conduct an honest and honorable business, and to build a spiritual character, together—this is to be your salvation. What is wrong as a calling, or what is wrong in your calling, you are to be saved from. If your business is of bad report, generating vice and calling down blame, save yourself from it. Save yourself from the barroom, and from the still-house, and from the gambling-turf. If your calling is virtuous and praiseworthy, and you have been abusing it, correct the abuse, and use it aright for the good of man and the glory of God. Here, I doubt not, is the needed exhortation for not a few persons to-day: be ye saved from the iniquity of a wrong business, be ye saved from slavery to a right business, as the sword of the Spirit pierces your heart with its convictions. Here break the last fetter; here make the final, complete surrender, and the jubilee of your salvation begins.

These are two great hindrances of this generation—fetters of pleasure, fetters of business. But they are not all. There are more than can be mentioned in a single sermon. Nay, there are subtle bonds, some single bond, some peculiar bond, holding this or that person, which the preacher may not clearly understand nor describe. It is felt by the sinner, even though not fully acknowledged, sometimes in the conviction of days or years. The Way is plain, the conscience protests, and still the man is not saved, because something

of what is around him and about him holds him back with its potent charm. Is it an influence of companionship? How deceptive that may be! I do not mean the companion that talks to you against the Church, or shames you out of obeying the Gospel, or argues you down by his unbelief of religion. No, not him; but the friend—silent, courteous, perhaps—whose friendship makes an atmosphere where faith can not thrive. He says nothing, or her air is that of indifference; but in that presence, because of its spirit, aim, taste, you know that any honest, open, positive profession of a Christian finds no congenial acceptance. You feel that, practically, to join the Church, you must give up any intimacies of friendship. Right here the paths diverge. Even, in a simpler way, does the trial come, while just as seriously a trial—say, to a young boy who should have to face the laugh or the jeer of his playmates, and show a heroism of faith just as real in quality as the faith of a martyr among the lions. Nor only the charm of some close personal friendship, but the association with a coterie, for instance, decent and moral enough in all appearance, but where the standards of thought and the prevalence of sentiment silently repress the health and bloom of a spiritual character. Or also some larger circle, more impersonal still, professional, literary, political, usually without very strict lines, where yet some sudden restriction of the lines, in either a theory or a practice, compels you to make a break if you would serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

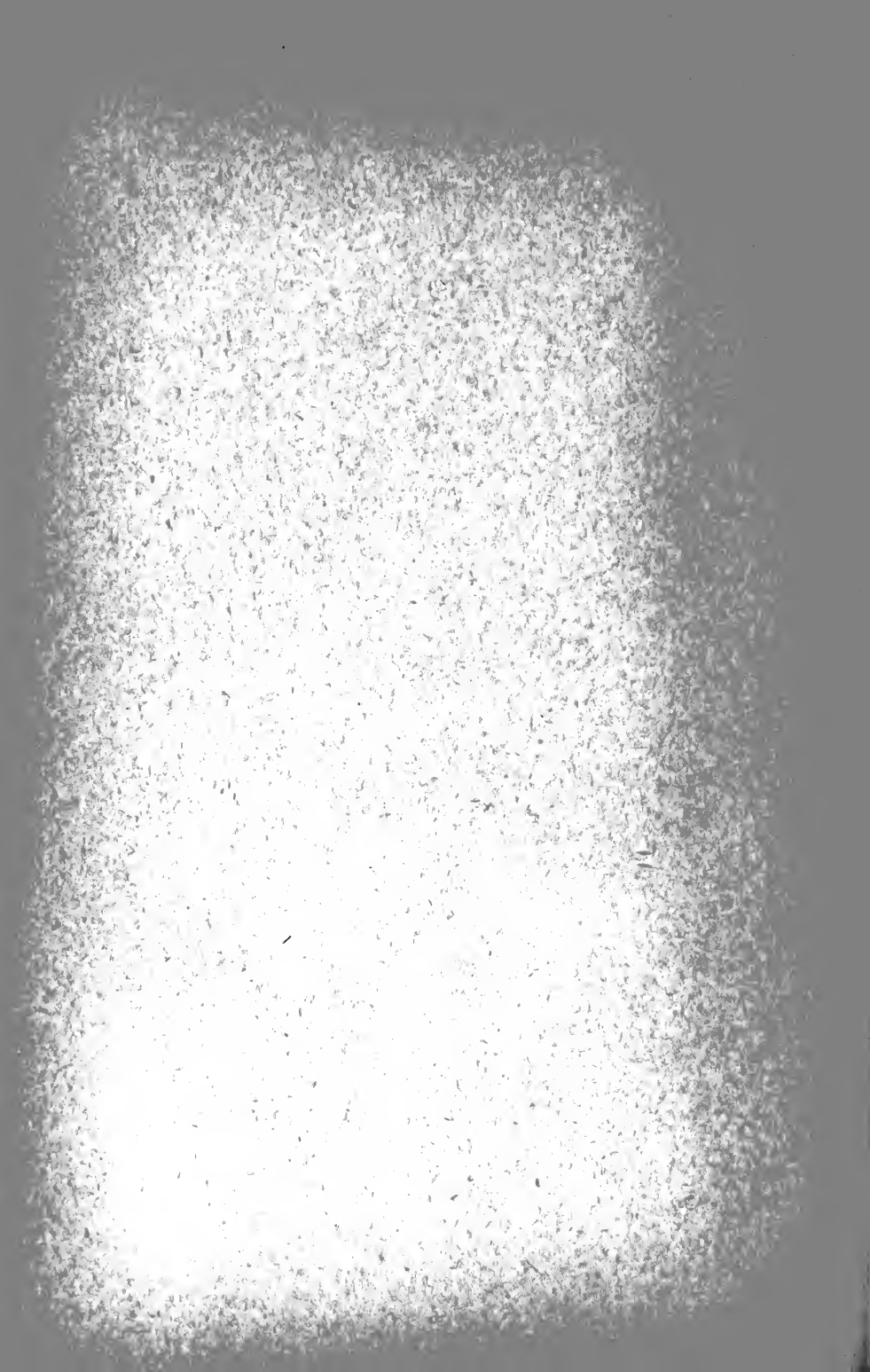
Ah! that was no superfluous work when Peter went on exhorting that Pentecostal day in Jerusalem. It was one of the realest scenes in all this real life. It

was the crisis of decision, the hour of destiny, for many a sinner. They stood convicted, not only convicted, but enlightened, the glory of salvation shining all around them, in which they might walk at liberty in openly confessing Christ. There they stood, convicted and enlightened, yet trembling and hesitating at the line of complete surrender. "Be ye saved from this crooked generation," cried out the man of God, pleading and exhorting at that decisive point. Yes, at the very last moment, they needed to be saved from a nation's haughtiness, from family pride, from social vanity, from the Pharisee's pride of character, from the Sadducee's pride of intellect, from any and every influence of that generation which stopped them from immediately becoming Christians; just as so many of you need to save yourselves from your environments—you from headlong pleasures, you from absorption in business, you from a silken friendship, you from some professional bondage, you from political corruption, in order to live as a child of God. I exhort you at the last step, as you feel your need of a Saviour. I exhort you, as you see the clear Way of salvation. I exhort you, as you now simply tremble, wait, hesitate, wonder. I exhort you at the very last step—the real surrender down in your heart; repent! repent! Be ye saved there first of all. In this day of the Lord's power, be willing to be saved. In mind and heart really, as the Spirit of truth convicts you, yield, yield, turn to God. I beseech you, in your heart believe the Gospel of your salvation; for with the heart man believes unto righteousness. In your heart repent of your sins; for God grants you repentance unto life. Out of your heart confess your Saviour and Lord; for

with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. From the heart be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins ; for your baptism will beautifully represent your salvation, it will helpfully confirm your salvation, it will blessedly associate your salvation with the salvation of others, it will significantly consummate your salvation in an obedience whose process is one with your salvation day by day, and the end eternal life.

SERMON XIV.

THE GOSPEL, A MISSION
AND A CULTURE.



XIV.

THE GOSPEL, A MISSION AND A CULTURE.

"Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the world."—*Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.*

The Gospel of Christ, studied in itself and studied in its history, has always presented these two ideas. The Gospel of Christ is a mission, and it is also a spiritual culture. "Make disciples of all the nations"—there it is a mission, a world-wide propagation. "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you"—there it is an unlimited spiritual culture of life. These two ideas, as such, are inseparably connected. They have their vital unity in the very nature of the Gospel, corresponding to the nature of man. They are the secret of Christ's undying influence on human nature and in human history. They were meant to go along together in a beautiful oneness of beneficence. The insistence on either idea to the neglect of the other, always does harm, and keeps back the complete triumph of the Gospel.

In the long eighteen centuries since Christianity began—began as a mission and as a spiritual culture—we can see the working of these two ideas at every step of its progress. They have worked at every step

in some way or other. They have made swift progress seldom, if ever, together at one time. Often, being separated, one has gone ahead successfully for a while, only to stop and be compelled to wait until the other has caught up; and, being separated, what one has achieved it has often found weakened because the other was not present with its balance of power. The Gospel as a mission has sometimes spread with the swiftness of wind or fire. It has crossed over into a Macedonia upon hearing the midnight cry for help, and the following day thousands have been baptized. Then there seems to have come, frequently, a pause. The Gospel had been propagated as a mission—disciples had been made; it needed to be grown as a spiritual culture of character—the disciples needed to be taught the manifold precepts of their Lord. But too often the growing of the Gospel as a spiritual culture of life has been attempted with a neglect of propagating it as a mission. The Church has settled down to mere speculation and criticism, and conversions to Christ have become infrequent. Then the propagative idea has burst out afresh, sometimes running terrible risks of perversions. We read again of stirring revivals, sometimes the conversion almost of a nation, or almost of a little province. But the propagative idea again subsides, and the work of grafting must be taken up once more. Such has been the progress of the Gospel with its double ideas—not a uniform progress, but one-sided; not a simple, untrammelled progress, but varied, struggling, laborious.

The occasion of it all is, that while Christianity is itself spiritual, spiritual as a mission and spiritual as a culture, it has been compelled to take men as they are,

men making the world as it is, making it so because of the earth on which they must exist and toil and die. The Gospel and earthly climates; the Gospel and national temperaments; the Gospel and human history—this is a necessary study amid all spreadings of the Gospel. Where it is preached on the earth, to whom it is preached, and especially at what stage of civilization it strikes a people, are immensely important questions. After men are baptized, the Lord does not translate them at once to heaven. Both Elijahs and Elishas are found in the Church on earth. The redeemed of the Lord stay here in this world, and some of them stay a long time. I think we ought to question ourselves severely whether we fully appreciate why Christians are present in this world. We say rightly that we are here to win the world to Christ. But do we see all the details involved in this answer? It is well enough to say that it takes time to evangelize the world. But why does it take time? It is the very manifoldness of the ideas of the Gospel that requires time for their realization. It is because they are traveling to reality through the channels of human nature between the banks of human history. Christianity, as a mission and as a spiritual culture, touches, leavens, stimulates, transfigures what we call civilization. It can not help having something to do with the clearing of a forest, and with the building of a court-house; with the spread of commerce, and with the growth of an educational system; with measures of war, and with measures of peace; with revolutions of nationalities, and with developments of legislation. The baptism of a penitent believer in boyhood, his death in venerable saintliness; the beginning of the Gospel from Jerusa-

lem, its end in the descent of the New Jerusalem from the opened heavens—between these periods is the awful immensity of earthly annals. Christianity can not skip them nor go around them. It must go under them and through them, become part and parcel of them, touch them, leaven them, transfigure them. Whatever man is and can become, rationally and spiritually, in respect of his own individuality, in respect of family, in respect of society, in respect of citizenship, in short, in the developments and adaptations of his whole nature rationally and spiritually—all this Christianity must take account of, and seriously take under its influence forever.

Mark the important epochs of Christianity, and see how they, one by one, with their special facts and features, illustrate these two forces of Christ's Gospel, a mission and a spiritual culture—concerned both with making disciples, and then making spiritual all their capacities and talents—concerned with man and mankind—forgiving men their past sins, and then claiming vital kinship with whatever interests men everywhere, rationally and spiritually.

A hundred years of the Gospel have gone by, and before half of this time had passed, Paul the Apostle declares, "From Jerusalem, and round about, even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ." Nay, so widely has the Gospel spread, such a propagation has it been, that he breaks forth in magnificent hyperbole—"preached in all creation under heaven." The Gospel had spread, a swift train of salvation, unchecked even through prairie fires of persecution. Every drop of martyr's blood became the seed of a church.

Three hundred years have gone by; and now the Roman Emperor bows before the vision of the Cross. Whatever the perversions of the Gospel in this time, whatever the beginnings of the awful tyranny of the Papacy, the triumph of Christianity in Roman society and government was a genuine triumph. It had worked its way against its enemies, often notwithstanding its friends, through heart and conscience to public recognition—the doom of idolatry, the standard of morals, the heart of philanthropy, the ideal of character.

A thousand years have gone by. This mighty Roman Empire, this mightiest empire of the ancient world, has been trampled into pieces under the conquering feet of the Northern tribes. The doom of decay was already in its heart when Christ was born. Weakened amid social luxuries and torn by military ambitions, it fell at last before the influx of fresh and hardy stock, as it poured down from the German forests. But the Church was there, with the Gospel still, though a perverted Gospel; with many a manhood of thought and piety, notwithstanding a hierarchy was now lording it over God's heritage. And it was the Church, as judged equally by a practical English historian like Macaulay and a speculative German philosopher like Hegel—it was the Church that saved human society from utter wreck, and slowly gathered the materials and established the conditions for the development of the modern world. She led captive to Christ the fierce conquerors of the Empire; she became the asylum of the oppressed; she conveyed ancient literature through the storm; she preserved and copied the Bible; she was the patron of art, although the foe of science;

it was her preaching, in spite of its corruptions, her organization, notwithstanding its tyrannies, that were the providences of God in preserving the social structure, and holding humanity to any knowledge of the redemption in Christ, and mysteriously feeding that double sense of the liberty of each man, the equality of all men, before God, which makes possible the realization at last of Christ's universal and eternal kingdom.

For, when five hundred years more had passed, fifteen hundred years since the Gospel began from Jerusalem, the new day of religious liberty dawned upon Europe. It was the age of Luther and the Reformation. But the liberty of the day was something more than religious. It was not only the protest of Luther against the Pope. There was also a tremendous emphasis of intellectual liberty. There were rapid and mighty assertions of civil liberty. It was, in the largest sense, the emancipation of mind, whose sun arose after the long night of the Middle Ages. It was not only the Gospel, reasserted in its essential simplicity, but more. See how the wonders are close together in time. Luther was born in 1483. Gutenberg had discovered the art of printing in 1450. Columbus was to discover America in 1492, and the new route to far-off India was to be found even before Columbus set sail. Copernicus, almost date by date with Luther's work, revolutionized astronomy. Paracelsus, born ten years after Luther, dying five years before Luther, originated chemistry as a science, with his doctrine—"The true use of chemistry is not to discover gold, but to prepare medicines." A new religion, the old Gospel renewed, but at the same time a new heaven,

a new earth, a new world ! It was all a reality of newness because of the new attitude of the human mind. Meanwhile had come the revival of learning right along with the printing press—the literature of the past, the treasure of the life of ancient humanity, revealed to the diligent search of scholar and the eager interest of humanist.

How luminous the lessons of these facts are ! The Gospel of Christ, and literature,—the Gospel of Christ, and science,—the Gospel of Christ, and commerce,—these are necessarily to be read together, to be studied together, to be lived together, if men are to know themselves, and what they are about. It took fifteen centuries for the Western world to learn this lesson at any depth. It was only the leaders then that learned the lesson at any depth. It has taken three hundred years more for the lesson to be read in its largest lights even by teachers in Israel ; it is only in the nineteenth century that the people, chiefly the English-speaking people, have begun to spell it out, to their unfailing instruction and inspiration.

We are all beginning to see more clearly that the Gospel of Christ is more than a mission. “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations”—there it is a mission, a mission of favor and mercy, ordained by its Author to be preached to the whole creation, that men, by believing and being baptized, may be saved from all their sins. But—“teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you”—there it is a spiritual culture for the development of all the rational and spiritual possibilities of human nature. As a mission and a culture, it is a sublime and satisfying unity. Saving men by favor and mercy, it is this

fact that is to be the powerful and endless motive of the growth of men, through their many-sided capacities, in their different vocations, through their varied experiences, into spirituality of character. "I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God"—this is the eternal reminder, to-morrow as well as to-day. By that first fact, the favor of God in Christ, which Christ brought us by His Incarnation and Sacrifice, the Gospel is the prime authority for all moral obedience. Every step in moral progress that does not begin from this obedience to the authority of Christ, in which we receive the forgiveness of sins, will be a misstep and a failure. The nation in which the Gospel is not powerfully present as a mission, will catch the infection of moral decay. But, present as a mission, propagated in its mission of favor and mercy, there comes the other duty, equally important, to grow it as a spiritual culture, to develop disciples, through their many-sided capacities, in their different vocations, through their varied experiences, into spirituality of character.

All this will be done as the Gospel takes men as they are, men making the world as it is, making it so because of the earth on which they must exist and toil and die. It is only another way of saying that Christianity and civilization must go along together in mutual actions and reactions. See this fact verified in the history of our own Nation. The Pilgrim Fathers, landing upon Plymouth Rock in the attitude of prayer; the pioneer men of our own West and South, hallowing camp and cabin by Gospel and song,—had upon their hands the work of building the temple of American nationality. They believed God—they cleared

forests. They loved Christ—they founded towns and cities. They read their Bibles—they passed laws for civil dignity and peace. They prayed—they organized the State. They sang psalms and hymns and spiritual songs—they gave a start to common schools. They served God—they served Cæsar. While rejoicing for their redemption in Christ, while hoping for Heaven, they were planting the seeds of a Christian civilization, watering them with their tears, sometimes with blood, dying before the harvest, leaving it for others to enter into their labors

See this fact, the need of the Gospel as a mission, the need of it as a spiritual culture of American civilization, also verified vividly for us right here in Kentucky. I refer to the mountain counties. The Gospel has been preached there a great deal. Fifty years ago our devoted evangelists rode over those hill countries, baptized people, organized churches. Their reports glowed with the recital of the numbers that turned to the Lord. To-day our State missionary board is perplexed over the religious condition of those mountain congregations. They confess that it is a problem. They see that something more is necessary for them than just to make disciples of the mountaineers. It is plain that the churches there need to be taught "to observe all things" commanded by Christ. And it is no wild leap, it is a rational and logical step, when our missionary women send thither a preacher that is also a schoolmaster, who, preaching on the Lord's day, may teach school during the week, and all the while live as an example before the community, in a well-ordered Christian family. What does all this mean but the individual man, the social man, in being redeemed,

must be cultured into a spiritual life along all the lines of his rational and spiritual nature ?

The same lesson holds good about foreign missions, most vividly of all where the Gospel is preached to the lowest heathen. It is the preacher, and the school-teacher ; the preacher, and the physician ; the preacher, and the printer ; the preacher, and his colony of artisans ; the preacher, and his Christian family—all these living the Gospel while the Gospel is preached. The Gospel, and the plow ; the Gospel, and books ; the Gospel, and the railway—so broadly, while making disciples of all nations, does the Gospel lay the foundations upon which they may build a Christian civilization.

The Gospel of Christ, therefore, as a spiritual culture of character ought to be a conscience and a set purpose and hope with all of us disciples. Whatever our name, whatever our station, whatever our calling, whatever our talents, we ought to believe that we can grow into spiritual manhood along all the lines of a rational and spiritual nature. Such a faith ought to be a clear, immovable, individual faith with each man ; he ought to cherish it as his right, his grant from his Creator, whose possibility redeems this earthly life from all lowness and despair, and gives it dignity and radiant hope.

What these main lines of our rational development are, I think that no one has more luminously pointed out than Matthew Arnold, in his famous fourfold phrasings on the subject. He felicitously strikes off the matter by calling attention to four lines of human development—first, the line of conduct ; second, the line of intellect ; third, the line of beauty ; fourth, the

line of manners. The more you think upon such a generalization, the more you will say that it can not be excelled. They admirably sum up the rational and spiritual possibilities of man. All history testifies to them. All stages of civilization, more or less, have felt their presence. The ideals of progress shine upon them and allure them. The Gospel of Christ must seriously take them under its influence. For the Gospel is as broad and deep as human nature. The teaching of Jesus Christ is meant not only to bring salvation from sin, but to be seed thought and germinal power for every rational and spiritual capacity of man. Listen to this splendid precept from one of Christ's Apostles—from Paul; it is a pregnant, healthful, exhaustive description of Christianity as a spiritual culture: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, take account of these things." That is what the great "doctor of the Gentiles" enjoins on you and me as Christians. We are Christians; but we are men. We are men; and we are Christians. We are Christian men. As men, because the Creator so constituted us, we must do duty, we must think reason, we must perceive beauty, we must observe manners; but we must do it all as Christians. The spirit, the light, the motive of all our living must come from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

What is thus true of the individual Christian is also applicable to congregations. They have a congregational life as such, to be affected vitally by the Gospel as a mission and the Gospel as a spiritual

culture of character. Many of these churches have been long-planted churches in long-inhabited States. With these two sides of the Gospel, a mission and a culture, the conditions of the long-planted churches will affect favorably or unfavorably all further spread of the Gospel; just as all spreading of the Gospel as a mission will generate motives and needs for the growing it as a spiritual culture. In these communities there is still a large number to whom the Gospel must be preached as a mission of favor and mercy. It is blindness to think that this number is ever exhausted in any neighborhood. And this propagation of the Gospel as a mission by long-planted churches, in long-settled communities, must be carried on, for us Americans, where the present stage of American civilization, largely produced by Christianity as to its good parts, has been acting back on church life, on Christian living, on all progress of the Gospel. We are blind to this momentous fact, at our deadly peril as Christians and as churches of Christ. We must look at and understand the power of Christianity on family life, on social life, on the States and the Nation, and their reactive influence on Christianity. If Christianity is to be the dominant power of a community, if the Church is to be the light of society and civilization, we must live and work as Christians and as congregations, with our eyes open to all these facts and their mutual influences.

Emphatically should the preacher of the Gospel proclaim the Word with his eyes wide open to the present status of American civilization, as the Gospel influences all the rational and spiritual lines of human development. Sound morals, true science, pure tastes,

noble manners—with these the Gospel of Jesus Christ has vital kinship. If the preacher cares for sound morals, he must speak pointedly against the vices and crimes of the liquor traffic, as it threatens the moral integrity of this nation. If he cares for true science, he must advocate liberty of thought, and inculcate the true spirit of tolerance. If he cares for pure tastes, he must proclaim the dangers of godless art, and vividly set forth the Bible breadths and depths of beauty. If he cares for noble manners, he must show the bad effects and hurtful hindrances of barbarous manners. I do not mean that every preacher is to give his time to moralizing on duty, or theorizing on science, or lecturing on æsthetics, or framing rules of etiquette; but I do mean that he should preach the Word of God with his eyes open to its farthest influences, rationally and spiritually, on human nature and human civilization. He need not stop to give minute counsels; but he ought to hold up Divine standards. He need not discuss varied effects; but he ought to describe inevitable tendencies. He need not advocate fanciful theories; but he ought to picture glorious possibilities. Wherever the Gospel touches human life for rational and spiritual good—the line of conduct, the line of intellect, the line of beauty, the line of manners—thither the preacher ought to look and to point, enlightening, counseling, exhorting—his speech, “as it were, oracles of God.”

There is a loud call for such preaching and for such churches, a loud call from every direction, and incessantly, in these long-inhabited communities where churches have been long planted. These rational and spiritual capacities of man are calling for wholesome

development. Some kind of development they will have. Some kind of civilization there will be. And the serious question is whether it shall be agnostic or Christian, whether merely utilitarian or fully spiritual. If the preachers of the Gospel ignore or neglect any rational or spiritual possibility of human nature, they in the end but keep back the progress of the Gospel. If the Church gives no attention to these varied capacities, if she narrowly views the purposes of the Gospel, if, in working for eternity, she works slightly, indifferently, incompletely for time, then civilization is a hopeless, Godless, Christless affair, and the Church becomes a kind of surgical institute, and not a home for rational and spiritual living.

I have no doubt but the minds of many of you have been running ahead of the sermon, and applying its truth to our own beloved congregation. It is a long-established church, in a long-established community. It is a historic church, rich in memories that are sacred to the hearts of its venerable lifelong members, and that speak a manifold lesson of duty and privilege to all. Such a church is not made in a day. It is a growth. It is what it is this festal hour no little because of what many faithful men and women have done for it in the long passing years. We are rejoicing specially to-day in the presence of this large number, the adult and the little child, who have put on Christ in baptism, and will for the first time join with us in our weekly communion of the body and blood of the Lord. But, brethren, we rejoice through thanksgivings, as well as in hope. I bid you look back beyond, far beyond, the special mission of the Gospel during these daily services of a month. Look back a half-century..

Fifty-three years ago, a band of a dozen brethren and sisters meeting down on Lower street in a shabby old house, sitting on rough-hewn benches, a dry goods box improvised into a pulpit; and to-day——! “What hath God wrought!” Others have labored, and we have entered into their labors. The triumph of evangelism again this month is livingly linked with the history of the Gospel in a long-standing church—the Gospel as a mission, and the Gospel as a culture, both together year after year in the lives and services of the elect of God. How many have here turned to the Lord under the preaching of a Henderson, a Franklin, a Lard, a Hopson! How many little lambs have here sung their hosannas, and here been baptized, taught by the saintly teacher * who, beyond threescore years and ten, is still spared for his long-time work, his eye not dim, his strength unabated! How sweetly solemn it is to see there in his chair, every Lord’s day almost unfailingly, the hoary-headed disciple † past his four-score and ten, the honored nonagenarian, more than half of his life marking his prayers and toils for the old Main Street church! Ah! venerable men and women, the time would fail me to call you each by name, not a few with us to-day, many, alas! now too feeble even to totter to the house of the Lord, or ever again to sit down with us in this court of our God!

Men and women of these later days, children and grandchildren of the pioneer fathers and mothers, I exhort you, count your mercies and behold your privileges. The Gospel has come to you in a beautiful heritage of ancestral faith and piety, to give you

* William Van Pelt. † Joseph G. Chinn.

salvation from all sin in the sacrifice of the Son of God. The Gospel is come to you in gentle influences, that you may grow thereby into perfect manhood in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel. Bring every thought into captivity to Christ. Let His service be your daily meat and drink. Grow, grow into an all-sided life, every talent, every aspiration, every taste, your whole mind and heart, reason, conscience, will, a rich development of character in obedience to Christ as Saviour and Lord. We are to go on holding this Gospel as a mission and a culture. Our individual salvation, our individual spiritual growth, must be realized in brotherly union and service. We must seek for wisdom from above to live before this community as a church of Christ ought to live, sounding forth the Gospel to the whole creation, holding forth the Word in our conduct before the world. We have to aspire to all that a church ought to be, as it feeds the hungry, visits the sick, teaches the ignorant, guides the young—a home for lonely hearts, a refuge for souls storm-tossed and driven, a gateway to Heaven sometimes for the venerable saint as he sits and listens for the Master's call, sometimes for the little child whose infant voice has here learned to sing the praises of the Lord. The close of the nineteenth century, an eminent city with the virtues and vices, the privileges and perils of American civilization, and ourselves one of the churches of God charged with the responsibility of the Gospel as a mission and a culture—let our duty and our privilege and our hope fill mind and heart as the voice of Jesus Christ our Lord speaks adown the ages—"Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing

them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and, lo! I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the world."

ESSAY.

SCRIPTURAL AND CATHOLIC
CREED OF BAPTISM.

THE NICENE CREED.

I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible :

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made ; Who, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered, and was buried ; And the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures ; And ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of the Father ; And he shall come again with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead, Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life ; Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, Who spake by the Prophets ; And I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church ; I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins ; And I look for the Resurrection of the dead ; And the Life of the world to come. Amen.

THE SCRIPTURAL AND CATHOLIC CREED OF BAPTISM.*

1.

THE INTEREST OF THE SUBJECT.

“I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins”—so the echo of the old creed has sounded through fifteen Christian centuries. “Their ministers have given up baptism for the remission of sins”—such not long ago was the report of a provincial Baptist journal about a body of preachers who, in this century, notably have reaffirmed this design of baptism. In the light of the voice of the old creed from Nicæa, and in the light of the gossip of the Baptist newspaper, there may be a true interest in this subject. It may rightly be a subject for candid and critical study. The Baptist organ seemed to report with relish that the aforesaid preachers had practically recanted any further doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins. The Baptist organ itself, while glorying in a denominational name that is thoroughly wet with baptism, evidently holds a theory of baptism that yields no sense of a purpose of the remission of sins. Still there is the Nicene Creed, fifteen hundred years old, whose confession concerning baptism is solemnly chanted to-day in assemblies of believers; and there is the fact that, especially in the last half century, a body of preachers,

* Reprinted from the “Christian Standard” A. D. 1890.

who profess to go back of Nicæa to Jerusalem, back of the authority of a human council to a Divine Apostleship, back of the wording of a human creed to the sound doctrine of an inspired commandment, have reaffirmed, with all the enthusiasm of edifying a critical historical need, the truth of baptism for the remission of sins.

The gossip of the Baptist editor has done us all good—us who repeat the Nicene note with hearty assent. It has set us thinking. It has called out editorials and contributions, questions and answers, essays and replies and rejoinders, testimonies and confessions. We have had, indeed, but another proof how each generation needs to refresh its mind on truth for itself, whether truth of Bible or Nature. Our very knowledge of truth will fade and become dim, except as we think it over for ourselves and study its bearings on duty, and mark its new help for new needs, and learn its good amid the ever-widening experiences of thought and life. We may be thankful for the indirect benefit occasioned by misunderstandings and misreports if, apart from the heat and smoke of debate, we are aroused to investigate again any Scripture doctrine for its meaning and profitableness. It is a signal, indeed, for gratulation when we look up and begin to see that there is truth for us. There may rightly be an assurance of truth to us in tenderly remembering those of whom we have learned it. A traditional truth is none the less necessarily rational and eternal truth. Nevertheless, all truth seen possible *for* us, whether in sacred traditions of the heart's own sweet memories or unmistakably proved in crises of history, can become truth *in* us only as we receive it anew in vital, personal appre-

hensions of one's own thought along with vital, personal obediences of one's own will. Anselm, in his *Cur Deus Homo*, has a noble thought about being diligent, after we have been settled in our faith, to understand what we believe. Let it be a rebuke to our carelessness, if often we are forced to zeal in studying the reason of a faith or a hope only under attacks or misrepresentations. But let us be thankful if, after all, in studying again the grounds of our convictions, we see better than ever what sure, catholic, scriptural doctrine we hold, whether of faith or morals or institutions, and see the doctrine better in discriminating its relations to other and larger truth of the Bible.

All this renewed discussion of baptism for the remission of sins has straightway led, as never before, to a direct study of the sense in which it is for the remission of sins. Editorials and essays, private talks and private letters, the interest of the subject now for nearly a year—all have steadily centered on this point—the sense of baptism for the remission of sins. There has been among us no doubt nor denial nor surrender of the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins, as the provincial editor gossips misunderstandingly of the table-talk of a circle of ministerial guests. No; all we humble reformatory disciples, advocating truly catholic doctrine, acknowledge what was additionally embodied in the creed of Nicæa—"one baptism for the remission of sins"—and what was authoritatively commanded in the Gospel at Jerusalem: "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins." Our real investigation, more than debate or difference, our serious study, is the sense of baptism for the remission of sins.

Certainly the great majority of us are seeking to be assured intelligently of this Apostolic doctrine, this truly catholic doctrine, and to be able to vindicate anew the practical good of the doctrine for sinners inquiring the way of salvation. On this last point impressively does the past speak to us—the past of our pioneer days in a religious reformation the grandest since John prayed on Patmos—when our pioneer men of God, in a dread historical crisis of dark doubts and baleful errors, proclaimed the old Apostolic commandment to whole benighted neighborhoods, until it shone indeed like a revelation of the light and mercy of God, and thousands upon thousands, as of yore in Jerusalem, received the Word, and were baptized. We rightly feel, both as readers of the Word and as students of history, that such truth of the Gospel, so remarkably proved anew at this far-down date in history, has no risk at all of being set aside nor given up. An advocacy of it here and there by the reformatory fathers may have been unbalanced. An interpretation of it may now and then have been unscripturally extreme. A use of it occasionally may have been absurd, positively foolish. Those godly men may not have seen all of its wide relations and rational agreements with other and wider truth of the Gospel. But what they saw, they saw straight, and they saw right, and what they saw they preached in the direct, practical good to sinners, the very like of which shines throughout the Acts of the Apostles, against all doubt or delay in the salvation of every inquirer.

We of this day feel all the surer, therefore, that a scriptural truth, so plainly worded—"Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the

remission of your sins"—and so healthfully taught—"They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls"—is more than a match for all error and heresy. We can but conclude that a real interest in it, whether in table-talk or in study, means simply the effort to see better the exact, full sense of it, the point of it for duty, and the place of it in the Gospel of grace and glory. To understand thus clearly and widely this design of baptism, is what we are shut up to, necessarily. It would be a waste of time to argue at any length that, in Acts ii. 38, the Word of God teaches that, in some sense, baptism is *for, unto, in order to*, the remission of sins. To labor at proving that the Greek preposition *eis* does not mean *for, unto, in order to*, representing the purpose or object of baptism, but means something altogether different, must be left to provincial Baptist editors and preachers. The voice of critical scholarship settles the meaning of the Greek, whether the scholar be Pædobaptist or Baptist. The long list of Pædobaptist scholars, lexicographers, commentators, might be quoted—a Cremer, an Alford, a Thayer, a Meyer, a Lange, a Schaff, a Barnes. They all agree in the one criticism that, in Acts ii. 38, the preposition *eis* expresses the purpose or object of "be baptized." No less do Baptist scholars, whose scholarship speaks before their theology, join this consensus of definition or comment—Hackett, and Boise, and Ripley, and Hovey. Still further might the comments of scholarship on other Scriptures be educed—Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 16; Acts xxii. 16; Rom. vi. 3, 4; I. Cor. vi. 11; Gal. iii. 26, 27; Eph. v. 26; Tit. iii. 5; Heb. x. 22; I Pet. iii. 21—interpreting the

vital relation of one's baptism to one's salvation. Every utterance of every creed of Christendom, from Nicæa to London, concerning baptism, but yields a note of the same kind: it speaks of baptism as in some sense really related to redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Looked at from every angle of view—scriptural, historical, critical or controversial—the capital point of interest as regards the design of baptism centers on the sense in which it is for the remission of sins. Creeds, confessions, commentaries labor at defining that. Their very differences prove that some such sense needs to be defined. Any historical caricature of the scriptural sense still hints at the scriptural sense to be truly represented. The very extreme theories of it, whether the sacerdotal dogma of the Roman Catholic Church, *opus operatum*, an ordinance conveying grace independently of the faith of the recipient; or the modern rationalistic doctrine heard sometimes among us, that it is a commandment of the Divine will to be obeyed by penitent believers for the remission of sins, this promise of forgiveness being altogether abstracted from any moral effect in the candidate baptized, and received by him on the simple condition of heartfelt repentance and faith, this the whole of the matter, with no reality nor realization of Divine influences on him or in him in the act of his baptism—both of these extreme theories, wrong as they are, most signally demonstrate, by their very failure at interpretation, that still there is some real sense in which baptism is for the remission of sins.

The true, scriptural sense of the design of baptism must, accordingly, represent a reality of the remission

of sins. It must be a real sense, yet without any taint of sacerdotalism. It must be a real sense, which suffers no evaporation of spiritual purpose and result. It must be a real sense, without countenancing the magic of the priest in baptizing a dying babe. It must be a real sense, which, in a true process of reason, is the very dissolution of the cold mechanics of logic that would send half of Christendom and all of heathendom to hell because of the lack of baptism. It must be a real sense, so that penitent believers, even very young boys or girls, repenting and believing, may be baptized unto the remission of their sins, and, like the Ethiopian nobleman, go on their way rejoicing. It must be a real sense, following the catholic creed—"I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins"—against all Baptist provincialism. It must be a real sense, confuting all heresy, corrective of all error, the completion of all negative or partial views, the harmony of scriptural truth in the full-orbed light of the pattern of sound words, the Apostolic commandment, "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins," or, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name."

2.

THE LARGE LIGHTS OF REDEMPTION IN THE WORD OF GOD.

In what sense, therefore, is baptism for the remission of sins? There is no other doctrine of Scripture that requires more careful handling. We are to avoid the perversion of sacerdotalism. We must not be drawn away into the error of Baptist provincialism. We must

not make of the ordinance a hard, dry commandment for obedience, where, in some abstract, fictitious way, the forgiveness of sins is promised apart from all spiritual light or moral good. These three mistakes—sacerdotalism, provincialism, rationalism—any one of them or all of them, can be avoided only as we mark carefully the setting of baptism in the order of salvation. The very emphasis of the Scriptures that speak of it in connection with one's salvation must always be heard amid the echoes of other Scriptures that speak of other things in connection with one's salvation. Here, unless we are very careful, there will result in our study or in our public teaching a sad distortion of truth, always more of harm, both to doctrine and life, than downright and outright heresy. It is an impressive lesson equally of mind and morals, how one can take a clear element of truth, state the element clearly and truthfully as far as it alone goes, even combine it with other elements of truth in strict forms of logic, and yet in the end egregiously fail to see the whole truth, whether of scriptural revelation or ethical philosophy or physical science, and actually exaggerate and vitiate the partial truth for any practical good, simply because of this one-eyed way of seeing and rationalizing.

We shall all certainly be workmen that need to be ashamed, if we do not rightly divide the Word of truth concerning baptism. A commandment of the Lord it is, with a specific blessing granted to those baptized, even the remission of sins. But there is so much else implied in it; there is so much else associated with it! If it is set by the Gospel in the order of one's salvation, so that it and one's salvation have their beautiful harmony of truth and good, this order and this salva-

tion we shall not understand, our understanding of them will be blurred and vitiated, unless we always steadily behold the large sense, the full nature, the whole truth of salvation in the light of God's Word. Salvation, in the light of God's Word, is no single thing. It is not an isolated blessing for just one need of man. It is not a blessing revealed only for one day in the exigency of one hour. It has more than one sense. It has a varied meaning. It is used in a large sense, and in special senses, while always the special senses shine in the light of the unity of the large and rounded meaning. When the Scriptures say, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark xvi. 16); or, "Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism" (I. Pet. iii. 21)—Scriptures in which unmistakably baptism and salvation, salvation and baptism, are affirmed together—our true concern then is to understand the special blessing of salvation in baptism, and to understand it in a reality that grows out of the large and rounded meaning of salvation in the revelation of a Gospel of grace. This decidedly, beyond a doubt, is the crucial point for study—the Biblical idea of salvation, so large, free, comprehensive, fruitful, in the knowledge of which we shall understand the sense of baptism for the remission of sins.

A careful induction, therefore, of the Scriptures that teach salvation, we ought to make—whence salvation is, what it is, how it is, when it is; its origin, its nature, its manner, its time; its Divine side, its human side; its large senses, its special senses, its relationship of senses, the unity of all these in the rich idea of redemption in the light of God's Word. Only in this comprehensive way shall we be able to avoid dispro-

portions and misrepresentations of the truth of the Gospel. Only thus shall we be able to appreciate aright any particular note of the revelation of redemption, in the present study of the sense of baptism for the remission of sins, while also appreciating duly the whole truth of the revelation of God in its necessary relation to the realities of the life of man.

In the first place, then, Scripture after Scripture reveals that the redemption of man was an eternal purpose in the mind of God. It was not an after-thought with Him. It was not a make-shift of His will merely to meet an emergency. It was not a new remedy which He invented to repair a damage that took Him by surprise. It was not a project of time, as men mark time; it was a purpose of God, as God sees eternity. In these assertions there is no fancy. They are, indeed, not milk for babes in Christ; they are solid food for full-grown Christians. Nor are they presumptuous attempts to discover the secret things that belong to the Lord; they are honest, humble, glad studies of the things that are revealed, belonging unto us and our children, and making vitally for our better obedience to the mind and will of God. There the Scriptures are, though it is only in this century that their weighty import has begun to be widely felt by diligent students of the Bible. Such a growth in the knowledge of scriptural truth ought not to meet with surprise nor distrust. Robinson, of Leyden, spoke the very mind of a thoughtful, obedient child of God, when, in parting from his pilgrim flock, he said, "I am verily persuaded that God hath yet more light to break forth from His Word." The Bible can not be wholly understood by one age for all faith and duty. There is a

progressive knowledge of the revelation of God. Some deeper depth is measured in the Word, some truer point of view of the Word is found, some principle of interpretation of the Word is more correctly applied, some broader idea of the Word is discovered, and henceforth the Gospel is better understood, and more mightily prevails. The progress of humanity in a more spiritual civilization, under the influence of the Gospel, necessarily reacts into a more comprehensive knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. Bishop Butler's dictum has been verified again and again—"It might possibly be intended that events, as they come to pass, should open and ascertain the meaning of several parts of the Scriptures."

This broadening and deepening knowledge of God's Word in successive ages has never been more signally proved than in the growing acquaintance of many minds with the Scriptures that teach the eternity of man's redemption as purpose and will in God. There the Scriptures have been for many a day. In this age of travel and communication far and near, of international fellowship, of the poet's dream of "the parliament of mankind, the federation of the world," have these Scriptures begun to make themselves deeply and impressively felt in the hearts of men. We may unmistakably mark them one by one, with their light of truth and good for humankind. Fundamentally, according to Paul, the very creation of man is wrapt up with his redemption (Col. i. 14-17). There is a Gospel of creation. The Saviour of the world is none other than the Mediator of its creation. Where our redemption is found, the forgiveness of our sins, there was our creation, in Him "who is the image of the invisible

God, the first-born of all creation; for in him were all things created." Not only "in him were all things created," but "through him"; not only "through him," but "unto him"; and "he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." He was the vital source of all creation; He has been the active medium of all creation; He is the living unity and support of all creation; He is the far-off goal to which the whole creation moves. Fundamentally, according to John, the person of Jesus of Nazareth must be viewed in the light of a timeless existence (John i. 1-3)—the Word, who "was with God," who "was God," and through whom, in this fellowship and oneness with God, Himself uncreated, "all things were made," without whom "was not anything made that hath been made." Fundamentally, according to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. i. 1-3), the Son, in whom God "hath at the end of these days spoken unto us," was He through whom God "made the worlds," and whom, "upholding all things by the word of his power," God "appointed heir of all things."

These Scriptures were not idly written. They were not given by inspiration, to let lie in idleness in the hands of the children of God. They were written for our learning, and especially in that they were written for the intensely practical end of meeting ignorances and heresies in the Apostolic age. They are, indeed, regnant and dominant Scriptures, the truth of which must be the master light of all our seeing the revelation of God in the salvation of man. They yield the lofty, luminous idea that, in the will of God, the existence of man is a redemption—in purpose, in process, in goal, a redemption. Man's creation was never a view

in God's mind apart from man's redemption. Any and every need of man as a creation had its fulfillment in the eternal purpose of God through Him who should be both the ground of creation and the medium of redemption. Sin, therefore, was not a surprise to God. In the mind of God there was a prevision of it; in the will of God there was a provision for it. Dark, awful, perplexing as it is, fraught with eternal perdition for ungodly men, there was never a moment in the mind and will of God but there was present a super-abounding grace for His creatures ; and there has never been an hour since Adam and Eve,

“Hand in hand, with wandering step and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way,”

but there has been the presence of redemption, whether in twilight tints of mornings heavily clouded, or in the noontide glory of the days of the Son of man.

Again and again do the regnant and dominant Scriptures express this sublime truth of the salvation of man, and express it luminously, richly, variedly, according to the light of the eternal will of God, as it shines more and more unto the perfect day of the goal of redemption. These Scriptures reveal not only the Word, who is the source, medium, support, goal of creation, but they speak “of the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. xiii. 8). They teach a redemption from “a vain manner of life” “with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,” and this Lamb Christ, who was “foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world” (I. Pet. i. 19, 20). They tell of a Redeemer who,

walking among men, more than once looks off in doctrine or prayer to eternity, speaking of a glory and of a love which He knew before the world was (John xvii. 5, 24). Their light shines high above all the course of human history, lining all the clouds of the vicissitudes of man, revealing not only the purpose, but the goal, of redemption—purpose, process and goal, a sublime unity of truth in the eternal will of God. What this eternal goal is, Paul impressively teaches, in a Scripture that comfortingly reveals the end of the course and changes of human life for those “that love God,” who “are called according to his purpose” (Rom. viii. 28, 29). “For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.” Conformity to the image of the Son of God—here is the goal of the salvation of man. Or, as the same Apostle expresses it with varied richness of style, in that lofty passage, Eph. i. 3–11, there was a choice of “us in him before the foundation of the world,” this the purpose, “that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love;” and this spiritual character is represented as one with a foreordination “unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself;” while again, in the rich reiterations of these eternal purposes of God “to sum up all things in Christ,” these holy ones, these sons, are “a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will.”

These are, indeed, Scriptures that can not be ignored nor slighted nor slurred without impoverishment of mind and life in the children of God. They were written by Paul for purposes of comfort to those that

first read them, to incite their gratitude and praise. A Calvinistic theology may take the heart out of them, and a Universalist theology may wrest them damagingly to sinners, and an Arminian theology may touch them gingerly and let them go; but aside from any and all perversions, high above all inferences and applications, what deeply concerns us in these studies is, that the Word of God sublimely reveals that the redemption of man was an eternal purpose with God, and that the goal of redemption, in the perfect day of that eternal light, was man's conformity to the image of the Son of God. This, unmistakably, instructively, is the large light of redemption, the master light of all our seeing; and unmistakably, too, instructively, there is, according to the Scriptures, a profound unity of creation and redemption in Him unto whom all things were created (Col. i. 16), and whom God appointed heir of all things (Heb. i. 2). Repeatedly, on the Divine side and on the human side, viewed in the eternal counsels of God concerning man, and in the light of man's attaining his true destiny, are creation and redemption profoundly and organically united in Him who is before all things, and in whom all things hold together (Col. i. 17). Man not only as created, but as redeemed by the blood of Christ, is the "new man," who "is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. iii. 10). In no other light than the light of a purpose, process, goal of redemption, in the eternal will of God, can the Bible be read aright. In this light, and in this light only, as a complete induction of Scriptures, will one, while comprehending the meaning of the Biblical doctrine of redemption, be able most fully to appreciate

and most effectively to "speak, as it were, oracles of God" concerning the scriptural doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins.

3.

THE HISTORICAL FACTS AND FULLNESS OF REDEMPTION.

We have seen the large lights, and the master light, of the redemption of man, according to God's Word. Let us go on to mark some of the more varied, more special aspects of this truth, while we do not fail to catch the notes of agreement that pervade them all. The master light, as we have seen, is *the conformity of man to the image of the Son of God* (Rom. viii. 29). The goal of redemption is holy and spotless character (Eph. i. 4). Or, as John represents it, it is a fellowship with the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested in the Son (I. John i. 1-3), the likeness of the children to Him who shall at last be manifested in glory (I. John iii. 1-3). All that is meant by man's salvation from sin, seeking God, knowing Him, loving Him, serving Him, worshipping Him, living in Him, living with Him, union and communion with Him on earth, and beyond death in the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, is one with the idea of the conformity of man to the image of the Son of God, in the light of God's eternal will. If the Scriptures thus reveal God as eternally purposing the redemption of man in man's creation, and we read there of His unceasing dealing with the sons of men, it must be that, whether in the large light of God's eternal purpose or in special lights of man's experiences, this presence and power of redemption will always be more

or less felt amid them all. What are the facts of God's dealing with man, and what is their interpretation, according to His Word? Let us, in this article, look chiefly at the historical side of the subject, while Paul gives us the interpretation thereof (Acts xvii. 16-34).

The Apostle stands in the midst of the Areopagus. The intellectual Athenians are around him. They are idolaters. They worship idols by the thousands, and every one with its name. But this is not the whole truth. Walking their streets, and studying the objects of their worship, Paul "found also an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD." There, in that fact, Paul found a door to open into the hearts of the Athenians for the entrance of the Gospel. He found, in this blind and ignorant worship of "an unknown god," the cry of the soul in the night for the true and living God. He does not hesitate so to interpret the hunger and needs of their hearts, and to interpret it so for them. "What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this set I forth unto you." The wealth of the Apostle's sermon is overflowing in its revelation of the attitude of God toward the world—His purposes, His feelings, His ways—what He is in Himself, what He did in creating mankind, how He has dealt with man in history, how He has stood, how He stands, in heart toward His creation, now fully revealed in the Gospel of His Son. God is Creator. He is Lord of Heaven and earth. He made the worlds and all things therein. He Himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. But He is not a Creator whose purposes and work were fulfilled in creation as a hard and fast limit and end in itself. In creation was wrapt up a unity of far-reaching, age-long, gracious providences in and through

the course of human lives. "God in history" is no idle phrase. He not only "made of one every nation of men," but He made them "to dwell on all the face of the earth." Amid all their migrations and revolutions, His will would be at work, as "having determined their appointed seasons and the bounds of their habitation." And in all this creation, fulfilling itself in continuous providences, there was one sweet purpose of His love—"that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him, and find him." They might fail to find Him; yet the fault, for some cause, would be theirs, as Paul, with tender reproachfulness, as it were, adds, "though he is not far from each one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." The nearness of God to man, God as the breath, movement, maintenance of man's life, physical and rational, man the offspring of God—here is the climax of argument why man should turn from idols, to serve a true and living God. The supreme lesson for us is that Paul, in his inspired theology, in the revelation of the essential relation of God and man, finds his true way to announce and enforce repentance in the name of a risen Lord. The wisdom of his speech bore its fruit. Some might mock; others were left only curious; but "certain men clave unto him, and believed"; and among these one of the very members of the Areopagus, Dionysius by name.

It is a classic proof-text. It is the Scripture in whose light to begin to read the facts of history, for their purpose and real meaning. Man created by God, created by God to seek after and find God, under whatever difficulties, obstructions, obscurities, failures,

while God is never far off, always near, very near, the very life of whatever life is in man, man His offspring—this is the idea which alone will illumine the annals of the race, and afford the reason of the existence of man. There is darkness, often a darkness which may be felt in all the land for many a day. But the wonder rather is that here and there, in the dwelling of a life, light is seen. There are waste and howling deserts, many a long and weary pilgrimage. It would all be a despair of mind and heart, if oases did not appear, in lovely verdure amid living waters. Nations walk in their own ways of idolatry and iniquity, well-nigh forgetting God; and yet He left not himself without witness of His goodness in rains and fruitful seasons, filling the heathen heart with food and gladness (Acts xiv. 16, 17). Sin is in the world, and death through sin. But there is a presence, and a power, too, not of man, but in man, making for righteousness, according as man receives it, and enkindling the hope of immortality beyond the grave.

Let the Scriptures speak for themselves. The interpretation will take care of itself. According to them, in prophecy or rite or psalm or parable or precept or prayer, in historical character or historical event, the course of human life, in which evil is present, making it a struggle, is still a struggle, not yet an utter defeat in absolute despair. Even in Eden, as the tragic life of man begins, man begins to crush his enemy (Gen. iii. 15). If the serpent bruises his heel, he bruises the serpent's head. If bloodshed now befouls the earth, the punishment of the murderer has its reason that "in the image of God made he man" (Gen. ix. 6). Not even a floodtide of destruction utterly destroys

the race. A preacher of righteousness is saved, and his family. In the new course of human history, men are seen building altars to the Lord, and are heard calling upon His name; and the Lord is pleased with the sacrifice of animals and prayer. A special way of redemption begins in Jehovah's providence, as the sin of idolatry becomes rampant. Abraham is called to be the father of a great nation, that in him, however, all the nations of the earth may be blessed. Henceforth two lines of Old Testament Scriptures reveal a significant, a deeply impressive lesson. There is a chosen people for whom God has special blessings, special for them at first that the full fruitage might bless mankind; yet the history of the chosen people is largely a history of idolatry and rebellion against their God, and His chastisement of their sins. There are nations and tribes and peoples and tongues not dealt with in like special revelations from the Lord, and yet, here and there among those that forget God and worship idols, appear one, another, still others, who feel after Jehovah, if haply they may find Him, nay, are seen to be His knowing and willing servants. Nobly and felicitously have they been called "the outside saints"—among them a Melchisedec, priest of God Most High, receiving obeisance from Abraham the father of Israel; a Jethro, worshiping the God of Israel after his son-in-law Moses, while mapping out for Moses political features of Israel's commonwealth; a Job, apart from Israel, without Bible or temple or priestly cult, feeling after and finding God in star and flower, in setting suns and the living air and the mind of man; a pure-hearted Ruth, speaking out of the deep heart of a chastened human affection, "Thy God

shall be my God"; a widow of Zarephath, a widow of the Bible style, cared for by the God of the widow, and confessing that the Word of the Lord in His prophet's mouth is truth; a Cyrus, gentle in temper, kingly in character, the friend of Israel, a worshiper of the one true God, called the Lord's shepherd, of whom the Lord Himself mysteriously spoke, "I have summoned thee, though thou hast not known me"—"I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me"; the Magi, following the star in the sky to find the Sun of their souls; devout Greeks, modestly speaking their earnest desire, "Sir, we would see Jesus"; a Roman captain, unknown by name, so fully and healthily believing that Jesus wonderingly says, "Verily, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel"; a Roman captain, Cornelius by name, so pious, so charitable, that he heard the voice of an angel, "Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God."

All the while, however, in this history of man, struggling with sin and confessing a righteousness not of himself, seeking after God and finding in Him righteousness and redemption, there is the other fact of God's seeking after man. While God is not far from any one of the sons of men, while in Him men live and move and have their being, He is purposing and preparing to reveal Himself to the eyes of man in a fullness of light and love. It will be thus truly a self-revelation of God. In the special way of redemption in Jehovah's providence, at last will appear the Redeemer. Salvation being from the chosen people, the Jews, finally will be manifested the Saviour. This fact of the full revelation of God in a person must be

grasped and steadily held, if we would comprehend the whole meaning of the Biblical doctrine of redemption. The prophets speak of Him. The sacrificial blood of bulls and goats foreshadows Him. The Lord's anointed ones—teachers, priests, kings—typify Him. Wondrous names and titles—Prince, Shepherd, Counselor, Messiah—all, all, in all their variety of figure and view of His character, dignity, service, work, are but many-sided representations of Him who, in meeting fully the deep, deep need of man, is evermore more than man. His name shall be JESUS; for it is He that will save His people from their sins. But this Saviour of sinners, long prophesied, appearing in the fullness of the times, will also have the name IMMANUEL, which is, being interpreted, *God with us*.

The historical facts of redemption we can never know too accurately and thoroughly. We should know them one by one, one after another, in their simplicity and order, until they are literally learned by heart. It may well be the congratulation of a man, that from a babe he has known the Sacred Writings concerning Jesus of Nazareth. From the manger to the cross, as the obedient Boy of His Father's house and as the obedient Son in Gethsemane; His journeyings, His residences, His companionships, His precepts, His mighty works; how He sat in the homes of men, and stood on the hillsides, and laid His hands on little children, how He smiled and wept and prayed; every note of Divine authority, and every aspect of a sinless character, and every sweet familiarity of a true human life—these, in the completeness of the historical record, we ought to be acquainted with by chapters and verses until it becomes the easiest habit of mind to recall or

relate them. For then we have not done with them. For they are indispensable for what follows. If "Christ" can not be understood without "Christ crucified," it is equally true that "Christ crucified" can not be understood without "Christ." If "Christ" is soundly preached only when "Christ crucified," also, is preached, it is just as true that "Christ crucified" is soundly preached only as "Christ," too, is preached. But, above all, it is emphatically true that "Christ and Him crucified" can be soundly understood and soundly preached only through the interpretation of the Holy Spirit in Apostolic authority and doctrine. It was the Christ's own promise to his Apostles that the Spirit of truth should come in His place, to bring to their remembrance all that He said to them (John xiv. 26), to make plain any darkness of His teaching (xvi. 25), to bear further witness of Himself (xv. 26), to complete His revelation of truth, to teach them all things, to guide them into all the truth (xvi. 12, 13). There is the life of Christ, the Saviour of the world a man among men in familiar fashion and ways, heard, seen, handled. There is His death, burial, and resurrection, over and over declared to have this meaning—"who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification"—in some profound sense, a sacrifice for sin, a necessity for man's redemption, without which man could not be saved. And there is this historical fulfillment of the prophetic word—"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness"—a fountain of salvation whose living waters begin to flow freely in world-wide tides, in the Apostolic Gospel of facts, precepts, promises,

according to the Redeemer's own interpretations of the Scriptures—"That the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Zech. xiii. 1; Luke xxiv. 46, 47). And there, unmistakably, undeniably, in the Apostolic preaching, as sinners hear of Him who died for their sins, and whom God exalted to be a Prince and Saviour, to grant repentance and remission of sins, they hear also the commandment: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts ii. 38; v. 31). But the Redeemer's walk among men, His suffering under Pontius Pilate, His death on the Roman cross, His burial in Joseph's tomb, His resurrection the third day from the dead, His ascension into heaven, and the proclamation of salvation in His name to the whole creation, and the simple commandment for men, as penitent believers, to be baptized in His name for the remission of their sins, have their meaning and power, as we shall see, in the light of an eternal truth and order—a truth before the world was, an order through all the life of man—one of the lofty Scriptures of which reads on this wise: "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. i. 1-3).

4.

THE DOCTRINAL ASPECTS AND UNITY OF THE TRUTH
OF REDEMPTION.

The fullness of redemption as a fact historically, in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, has, in more Scriptures than one, a presentation of its relation to the person of Christ, as an eternal truth and order—a truth before the world was, an order through all the life of man. The passage already quoted (Heb. i. 1-3) is but one of the classical texts whose meaning speaks emphatically thus. It is by such Scriptures as these that the Biblical doctrine of redemption must be rightly read and interpreted. They are deep, but not obscure. They are a revelation of light to him who studies them with devout mind and heart. Whatever difficulty of text or context appears, it is very clear that the authors of them wrote them for intensely practical ends. The true disciples who would read and ponder those living words, would be learning all the time to know better Him whom they had believed—His character in history illumined by His dignity in the universe, His work in the flesh interpreted by His prior work in creation, His death for all men justified by what he was to them in the purposes of God before the foundation of the world, His own manifestation as the Son of man a further revelation of what he was essentially as the Son of God, His Mediatorship thus a mediation of both creation and redemption, whose truth and order are the great light of the Bible, and of the life of man, rationally and morally, hitherto and evermore. Let us tabulate four of these classic Scriptures, some of them already quoted, and endeavor to

understand aright their doctrine, aspect by aspect, as at last they agree in that unity of truth which reveals the will and way of God continually in all the real life of man.

1. Heb. i. 1-3. This passage speaks of the revelation of God, first fragmentarily and variedly, in a statute or a prophecy, by a dream or a vision. But through all this partialness and variedness of truth, the increasing purpose ran of the full and perfect revelation in the Son. Incomplete as was the old-time speech, it was a preparation for God to speak "at the end of these days," in the Son. Now appear the eternal lights of the historical manifestation. Who is this Son, beheld, heard, handled? "Heir of all things," "through whom God made the worlds." Who is He that died on the cross, and "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," "when he had made purification of sins"? "The effulgence" of the "glory" of God, "the very image of his substance," or essence, "upholding all things by the word of his power." In short, creation, unceasing mediation, redemption, heirship, all are spoken of "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus." And a clear aspect of this classic Scripture is, that His having "made purification of sins" is so evenly set in the doctrine of His relation to God in substance or essence, and of His sustaining power under and through the universe.

2. Col. i. 13-23. We repeat this master Scripture also. The notes of redemption are emphatically here. There appears the distinct note of the forgiveness of sins, and there appears, too, the prolonged note of the reconciliation wrought by the blood of the Cross. We read also of those who there in Colosse have been

reconciled to God in hearing this word of the truth of the Gospel. But a larger light, let us remember again and again, is revealed. It is certainly a deep lesson for our learning that, between the doctrine of the forgiveness of our sins and the doctrine of the Cross, where the reconciliation was wrought, is heard, in vital association, the doctrine that the Redeemer "is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation," the support of all creation, the goal of all creation.

3. John i. 1-18. This classic proof-text properly has its repetition, now in full length. There is the doctrine of the plain Gospel, that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The historical facts are firm and sure. But the Apostle's eye rises from earth, to sweep the universe of truth that shines above them all and through them all and in them all. It is the vision of Him who, becoming flesh and dwelling among men, was in the beginning "with God" and "was God," who, in that eternal oneness and fellowship, became the medium of creation, the source of life, the light of men, "the true light, even the light which lighteth every man coming into the world."

4. Rom. v. 12-21. This Scripture emphasizes more especially the manward aspects of redemption. It sets the sin of man and the grace of God over against one another. It brings out the history of sin and the history of redemption together. What sin does, and what redemption does, are predicated of the race, as a race. "Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned." The "one man," the first man, was Adam. But there is, as Paul elsewhere

teaches, "the second man," "the last Adam" (I. Cor. xv. 45-47), of whom the first "is a figure." Mankind has its representative, what He is to all, what He does for all, in the second Adam even more than in the first. The key-note is this—"Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly." In this light the contrasts are rich with good for humanity. The "free gift" differs from "the trespass" in every way. "By the trespass of the one the many died," for the simple reason that Adam represented the race, and in his sin the race sinned and died. But mark the contrast: "Much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many." The Apostle's tenses are purposely definite, according to the accurate translation of the Revised Version. He contrasts sin and redemption not only in fact, but in time. We begin to hear the scriptural harmonies of those sublime notes—"Who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world"—"the lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world." Looked at in respect of time, past, present and future, whatever the point of view, wherever the sin, much more the grace. Looked at in respect of facts, whatever the sin and its effects, much better the redemption and its influences. "If the judgment came of one unto condemnation," "the free gift came of many trespasses unto justification." "If by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one, much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ." If "through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of

righteousness, the free gift came unto all men to justification of life." If "through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous." Nay, not even the increase of sin occasioned by the stern voice of the law's obligation on man to do right, as it revealed to him his guilt and weakness, could surpass the grace of God; "but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly."

If we will but be fair and true to this masterpiece of Paul, in an unprejudiced exegesis, then we need to fear neither a dark Augustinianism nor a bald Universalism. There is no hereditary, total depravity here; neither is there any fixed and fast universal salvation. Nor is it an exposition of Paul's teaching, but an imposition, to make these luminous ten verses primarily and chiefly a doctrine of the resurrection of the body, with incidental notes about a salvation from personal sins for those that hear the Gospel and accept it. This classic Scripture should be interpreted justly and courageously for its plainest meaning without our needless fears of false inferences and applications. Concerning all four of these pregnant Scriptures, indeed, do we need a special lesson to read and interpret them aright. It is the lesson to consider carefully the point of view from which, as regards time or stage or aspect, the Scriptures speak of redemption as a procedure of God in dealing with man, and of redemption as an influence upon man which man receives or resists, appropriates or rejects.

The first three of these Scriptures considered, set forth redemption more especially in relation to the per-

son of the Redeemer, the facts of history viewed in the light of God's purposes before the world was. The last one sets forth redemption as a climax in history, the eternal purposes of God now viewed as they actually accomplish the salvation of mankind. The Bible could not represent redemption as purpose, process, goal in any other light. Such words, at once so wide as regards persons, and so definite as regards what is done for them, must be used. The race, as such, is spoken of. The individual may wither under eternal condemnation; but humanity is potentially redeemed. Paul could not state the fact more clearly. He contrasts Adam and Christ, what each is to the race—in the one, sin; in the other, redemption: in the one, death; in the other, life. What humanity lost in Adam, it more than regained in Christ. God views mankind not primarily and continuously in Adam, but eternally and historically in Christ. His attitude toward man is a purpose of redemption, in starlight or sunlight, according to the times and the seasons of His own authority. The absolute language of Paul in Rom. v. 12-21, while it must be interpreted harmoniously with the Scriptures that threaten the condemnation of disbelievers, that darkly picture a "lake of fire," and that speak ominously of the "second death," is still absolutely true as declaring the real, first attitude of God towards the sons of men and His actual dealings daily with them. The beautiful Biblical picture of God—the outstretched hands, the brooding wings, the shepherd's tender voice, the father's hungry, far-off look—but faintly represent the heart and will of God in all His graces and providences at work redeeming man. What we want to know and to ponder is

that, in the light of these first three Scriptures, redemption is taught as an eternal purpose with God as seen in the relation of Christ to the creation of man, and that, in the light of the fourth Scripture, this redemption is declared to be a historical fact, an assurance, an accomplishment, in whose meaning the whole Bible is to be read, according to whose power the will of God is to be viewed as ceaselessly working, under whose influence all the reason and good of human life are to be interpreted and realized. Redemption is not merely a provision of God's grace, which God offers to men while He sits passively back and waits to see whether they will accept or reject it. It is the purpose according to which God has ever looked toward man. It is the light in which He looks upon man. It is the love which He feels for man. It is the truth in which He works for man and in man. It is His purpose, light, love, truth, now fully revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, ever affecting man, and actually effective in man, a savor of life unto life or of death unto death, as man receives or resists it, appropriates or rejects it.

Such is the Biblical doctrine of redemption in these notable Scriptures, indisputably the classic Scriptures of the subject. An eternal purpose, process, goal with God, a Gospel fact and word in time—these as making a unity of truth, how true and real they are in human life in countless rich relations, is amply proved in many another Scripture. It is only in the light of such a truth that many other Scriptures can be understood. Let us consider some of them.

1. There are, first of all, the Scriptures that speak of this redemption as finished in the death of the Son

of God on the Cross. The death of Christ for sin is represented in many a light in the Bible—"a redemption," "a ransom," "a propitiation," "a sacrifice," "a reconciliation." There need be no surprise that devout men have honestly differed in their understanding and interpretation of these varied, healthful words of the Scriptures. But, with all difference of views on what the old version calls "the atonement," there ought to be a sweet tolerance, one for the other, among any who believe and teach that, in some profound sense, the death of the Son of God was a necessity in order to the forgiveness of sins—that "apart from shedding of blood there is no remission." This tolerance should be all the easier in this age, when, undoubtedly, more light is breaking forth from God's Word, showing the eternal relation of God's Son to humanity. In that view, the more we read and study, we shall see that the death of Christ for sin was not a fiction nor an expedient of Divine mercy meant to confound all reason. His birth had His death in view. Bethlehem led to Calvary. The incarnation and the reconciliation are to be studied together. The varied aspects of the Cross have their place in the person of Christ as essentially related to God and man; and the suffering of death, viewed as ransom or propitiation or sacrifice or reconciliation, has its meaning and power in the perfect character and perfect obedience of Him who was at once Son of God and Son of man. The Scriptures declare Jesus's tasting of death for every man to be an eternal propriety. It was because of a purpose and goal of God in creation that the Author of salvation must have His perfection through sufferings. In the perfection of His obedience in suffering

He became "unto all that obey him the author of eternal salvation" (Heb. ii. 9, 10; v. 8, 9).

2. There are the Scriptures that represent this reconciliation, thus perfected in the death of Christ, as looking both backward and forward. In it shines the "righteousness" of God "because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime," in His forbearance (Rom. iii. 25). In it is seen the imperfection of Jewish altars of bloody sacrifices, whose lack and need are fulfilled by the perfect sacrifice of the Son of God (Heb. x. 1-18). In it appears at last the "glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle," "holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 25-27).

3. There are the Scriptures that uniquely set forth redemption and reconciliation as the eternal purpose of God for the Gentiles, now fulfilled historically in their salvation (Eph. iii. 1-13). It was a "mystery," "hid in God who created all things," "the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord," which "hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to wit, that the Gentiles," not "should be," as translated in the old version, but as in the Revised Version, "are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise of Christ Jesus through the Gospel." It is the very historical crisis of their redemption and reconciliation, as it demonstrated the eternal purposes of God's love, which fires Paul in his ministry to the Gentiles. "The love of Christ constraineth us," he cries; "because we thus judge that one died for all, therefore all died." To Paul, the death of Christ potentiated and expressed the death of every man to sin. In that death for all was the redemption from sin

for all, not fictional nor figurative, but a real potency of salvation, if each one would appropriate it as a life—"that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again." What made this reconciliation a reality for Paul's ministry, so that he could call it "the ministry of reconciliation," was that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself"—the reconciliation just that real as a process on God's part, one proof of which was in God's "not reckoning unto them their trespasses" (II. Cor. v. 14-19).

4. There are the Scriptures, singularly instructive and impressive, that declare or imply that man is essentially a rational and moral being, and is thus a subject of revelation and redemption. The wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness is a possibility of revelation, because "that which may be known of God is manifest in them," "his everlasting power and divinity," all along from the dawn of creation, being perceived by men in the frame-work of things in which they live (Rom. i. 18-20). This ability of man to read both the starry heavens above and the moral law within him is impressively taught in the Scriptures. It is an ability notwithstanding sin, not, indeed, denying his sin nor weakness nor guilt, implying these, but certainly implying in itself the perception of right and good, the consent to these, the obligation to do them even though the effort fall short of perfection through the evil that with man is ever present. In one light, men are represented as "by nature children of wrath" (Eph. ii. 3). In another light, some of them are represented as doing "by nature" what is right, the law of God being written in

their hearts, where conscience sits as judge (Rom. ii. 14-16). But this ability of moral perception as a native force with every man, has its source deeper than the single eye of any man. It is from Him whom John declares to be "the true light, even the light which lighteth every man coming into the world" (John i. 9). The fact of moral aspiration and struggle, which Paul states as true of Gentiles between his dread picture of the Gentile world and the Jewish people as both condemned, and which causes them to be accounted righteous before God, has its reason deeper than the hunger and the effort. This relative doing of the law, amid weaknesses and failures, amid approvals and disapprovals of conscience, must, according to Paul's sublime teaching, be viewed in the light of the very Gospel of Jesus Christ which the Apostle was carrying to the Gentile world. God's principles of judgment, searching the secrets of men, would show these Gentiles as righteous in Him who, though unknown to them, had been the light and strength of their lives, unto their salvation.

5. There are the Scriptures which so variedly and beautifully express the truth of redemption, what is eternal with God, with reference to time as man views days and years—now past, then present, again future. The inspired heart of Zacharias could sing at the birth of John the Baptist, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; for he hath visited and wrought redemption for his people" (Luke i. 68, 69), a redemption sung of as veritably accomplished. The inspired mind of Paul could write of the Holy Spirit "as an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession" (Eph. i. 14), a redemption toward which the life

in the Spirit was still moving as a goal. Again and again is God described as "our Saviour." The phrase has its reason truly in that He is "the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe" (I. Tim. iv. 10). The specialty of the believer's salvation is his own appropriating, and not rejecting, the salvation which all flesh shall see (Luke iii. 6), which the grace of God brings to all men (Tit. ii. 11), which is the undeniable proof of God's look and attitude of kindness and love toward man (Tit. iii. 4). We read of the world-wide multitude of men as "the children of God scattered abroad" (John xi. 52); while we read also that to "as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John i. 12). It is the simple, deep truth that every man is the child of God, both by his creation and redemption in Christ, while still every man is born of God, as he receives this right of sonship by faith in Christ, and becomes more and more a renewed, spiritual man, "renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. iii. 10). Christ declares of himself that He is the good shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep; and He looks beyond the sheep there about Him, and sees other sheep afar off whom He must also bring, that all may become one flock, one shepherd (John x. 15, 16).

Such, according to the Scriptures, is the truth of redemption—a redemption that is a purpose, process, goal with God eternally; a grace, a gift, a reality of light and love, the will of God ever working for man and in man, in the mediation of His Son, whether by law of statute or conscience, or by promise of Gospel. It is a truth which, when fully realized in all its reve-

lation of grace and love, reveals all the more vividly the responsibility of man. As God loves the world, and sends His Son not to judge the world, but to save it, we must learn to understand this mission of redemption consistently with the fact immediately added—the fact of salvation or the fact of condemnation becoming the experience of man, in prospect of eternal life or in danger of the second death—“He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John iii. 16–18). We must learn to appreciate this eternal, unceasing work of redemption for man and in man, “to account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation” (II. Pet. iii. 15), while in the history of men judgment has begun—“He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John iii. 36).

This doctrine of redemption, a truth eternal with God, an order through all the life of man, magnifying the love of God, and intensifying the responsibility of man, we shall now see fully proved in the Apostolic ministry of the Gospel, as, in their preaching of redemption, appears the beautiful and helpful sense in which they preached baptism for the remission of sins.

5.

THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY OF BAPTISM, IN THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL.

The Apostolic ministry of the Gospel conveys the fullness of the blessing of Christ. The revelation of the grace of God to the holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit, was the climax of revelation. The author-

ity of the Lord Jesus Christ is proclaimed fully and finally in the Apostolic Gospel. In the Book of the Acts, we plainly see all sorts and conditions of men walking in the way of salvation, without a doubt, rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins. The steps of salvation, as all may easily understand them, are distinctly announced, as a Peter preaches in Jerusalem, or a Philip in Samaria, or a Paul in Rome. And in the Apostolic Gospel appears, beyond all question, the doctrine of redemption as a truth eternal with God, and an order through all the life of man. Every note of the Apostolic ministry of the Word teaches, explicitly or implicitly, this truth as purpose, process, goal with God, affecting men always and everywhere, and intensifying their responsibility in the noontide sunlight of the Gospel of grace and glory. Three facts abundantly prove and illustrate this affirmation. It is in such an Apostolic ministry of the Gospel, thus proved and illustrated, that the Apostolic ministry of baptism for the remission of sins, in all its rational and helpful meaning, will duly and signally appear.

1. There is the strong, significant proof that salvation was preached first to the Jews (Rom. i. 16). It became a necessity of historical order, inasmuch as salvation was from the Jews (John iv. 22). Every Jew who heard the Apostles preach, heard them appeal to the past. Redemption was not the manufacture of a day. Historically viewed, it was a growth, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Abraham rejoiced that he should see Christ's day, and was glad (John viii. 56). Prophets and heroes died "in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar" (Heb. xi. 13).

In the free course of the Gospel throughout the world, while Jews were ignorantly zealous for God, and failed to subject themselves to the righteousness of God, over them in their disobedience could Paul vicariously pray, could he patriotically write, "whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises" (Rom. ix. 1-5). The appeal was to other ages, in which redemption was preparing. Out of the preparation of redemption came the exhortation to the obedience of faith, in the full revelation of redemption (Rom. xvi. 23-27). So was the Gospel preached to the Jews, in memory of redemption, in view of the purposes and promises of God. The Jews were sinners. Jew and Gentile alike, it should be proved, had sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. iii. 19-26), and both needed the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The first full and authoritative Gospel sermons were preached to Jews who had crucified the Son of God. The fact of their heinous sin burnt itself all the more hotly into their hearts in the light of prophecy fulfilled, in view of the gracious will of God accomplished, as they saw Jesus exalted to be "a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins" (Acts v. 31). To the Jews, from whom came salvation; to the Jews, who could truly say, "Our fathers' God"; to the Jews, of whom Jehovah had said over and over, "My people Israel"; to the Jews, who, though "a disobedient and gainsaying people," are still "his people which he foreknew," who, "as touching the election," "are beloved for the fathers' sake," whom, according to Paul's striking figure, God will graft in again into their own good olive tree,

where once they were the natural branches, appropriately belonging (Rom. xi.); to the Jews then in Jerusalem, "devout men from every nation under heaven" (Acts ii. 5), whom Peter addresses as "the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers" (Acts iii. 25), unto whom God first sent His Servant "to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities" (Acts iii. 26); to the Jews who could remember redemption as a process of the past, upon whose vision redemption was rising as the fullness of blessing in the present, believing in their fathers' God, now convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ of their prophets, did Peter proclaim, in answer to the cry of their guilty hearts: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts ii. 37, 38).

2. There is the fact, no less strong and significant, that salvation advanced into the Gentile world through those that were nearest to the Jews, as regards theological belief and spiritual receptivity. "In Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"—such was the course of the Gospel. The liberal-minded Philip "went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed unto them the Christ," and "when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts viii. 5, 12). The reception of the Apostolic Gospel had already begun before Philip's day, when many, many of the Samaritans saw and heard Jesus in person, and confessed a faith strangely intelligent and liberal—"We know that this is indeed

the Saviour of the world" (John iv. 39-42). We read of a Gentile from far-off Ethiopia, believing in the God of Israel, journeying to Jerusalem to worship God, absorbed in the study of God's Word—him also, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, ripe for the Gospel of his salvation, hearing it from Philip's lips, and eagerly asking for baptism (Acts viii. 26-39). The case of Cornelius, another Gentile, is impressively conspicuous. He is "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway" (Acts x., xi.). It was while at prayer that the message of the angel came to him to send for Peter, "who shall tell thee words whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house." But a vision had come also to Peter in prayer, and a strange word of interpretation—"What God hath cleansed, make not thou common"—whose full meaning dawned upon him, as he stood in the presence of the man of prayers and alms, who was so ready to hear and obey the Lord. Of Cornelius, so ready to hear of salvation, could a Peter at last say, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him." The special descent of the Holy Spirit on these Gentile hearers of the Word, in the gift of tongues, was the climax of conviction for Peter. It was the demonstration, for eye and ear, of the sanctification of the Spirit in which God had from the beginning chosen the Gentiles unto salvation (II. Thess. ii. 13). What more could Peter say but immediately to command Cornelius and his exultant household to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus? And thus the Apostolic ministry contin-

ually runs. In the synagogue first, there to meet the Jews; through them and beyond them, whether obedient or disobedient to the Word, to find the Gentiles nearest to them—"of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few" (Acts xvii. 4)—so does Paul, for instance, the Apostle to the Gentiles, win his way into the Gentile world, looking out for spiritual hunger and budding faith. The history of the preaching of redemption fairly reaches the sublime where, as the footsteps of Paul are guided by the Spirit at last to Troas, facing idolatrous Europe, he sees in the night a vision, a Macedonian "standing beseeching him and saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us." The great, sad need of the great European world, in all its sin and ignorance, is touchingly pictured as the conscious cry of one man. The very vision could be possible and true only as the presence of God in His creation, working toward its redemption, should evoke the sense of need, evoking it first so sublimely in ideal, as it should soon now be really aroused under the actual Gospel call. Such sights were not only Paul's guidance, but in them he had to find his strength and hope, as, in preaching the Gospel amid storms of trial, for instance in Corinth, preaching the Divine provision of redemption, he rested in the assurance of the Divine possession already of a multitude of the redeemed—"Be not afraid, but speak . . . for I have much people in this city" (Acts xviii. 9, 10).

3. There is the luminous teaching of the Apostolic Word, as well as of Christ Himself, concerning the relation of children to the redemption that is in Him. The facts, the precepts, the promises of this relation,

the whole trend of the Bible, each special Scripture, concerning childhood, as such, all shine distinctly in the light of the eternal relation of the Son of God to humanity in creation and redemption. According to the Old Testament, "children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Ps. cxxvii. 3). The very purposes of God in fatherhood and motherhood for the propagation of the race, are declared to be preëminently spiritual: "And did he not make one, although he had the residue of the spirit? And wherefore one? He sought a godly seed" (Mal. ii. 15). The Old Testament notes are frequent and emphatic that children shall be diligently taught the law of the Lord (Deut. vi. 6, 7), and that a child can be trained in the right way for manhood's estate (Prov. xxii. 6). As the precept is given, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth" (Ecc. xii. 1), the glad confession is elsewhere heard, "Thou art my trust from my youth" (Ps. lxxi. 5). A Samuel, a David, a Josiah, are seen as children serving Jehovah, and receiving His abundant blessing. The New Testament loses nothing of this truth of the moral abilities and spiritual capacities of childhood. It here reappears with intenser light and emphasis. Christ finds in childhood spiritual traits that must test the conversion of men (Matt. xviii.). A little child, in its trust, its docility, its humility, may be received in His name. The little ones may believe on Him. Each little one has its guardian angel. It is not the will of God that one of these little ones should perish. On children, yea, on babes, He places His hands in blessings, declaring, "Of such is the kingdom of God." The Apostolic Word especially views them in this vital relation to redemption, as

the duty of the parent, the duty of the child, are faithfully taught. The parent is to "nurture" the child "in the chastening and admonition of the Lord"; and children are to obey their parents "in the Lord" (Eph. vi. 1-4). The faith of father and mother, the faith of even one of them, is a spiritual circle, in which the child dwells in holy relationship and under sanctifying influences, where the life of the child has already received holiness in the germ (I. Cor. vii. 14). The conspicuous New Testament example of this luminous aspect of the truth of redemption, is Timothy. Born a Jew, "from a babe" knowing "the sacred writings," taught to love God as he was taught to speak the truth and do right, taught to obey his parents as he was taught to believe in the Messiah to come, morality and religion a unity of faith and duty as fast as he could learn them, his salvation became to him a clear truth and a full possession, in his very boyhood, "through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II. Tim. iii. 14-17). Beautiful, indeed, is the Biblical truth of redemption in its varied, vital bearings on childhood; and the charm of its beauty is distinctly felt as we hear the children singing in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Matt. xxi. 15), or kneeling, with wondering little hearts, along with fathers and mothers on the seashore around the good Apostle Paul, in prayer (Acts xxi. 5, 6).

Here, therefore, we may begin to understand the rational and helpful sense in which baptism is for the remission of sins. It is a real sense, fraught with good for every one who hears the Gospel of his salvation. It shines in all this large light of the truth of redemption, whose rich aspects we have been endeavoring to

appreciate. It becomes specifically clear in the Apostolic ministry of the Gospel, according to the Book of the Acts.

The negative mistakes about the design of baptism easily melt away in the clear light of the truth of redemption.

1. Baptism is not for the remission of sins, in the sense of *a magical, sacerdotal institution*. It does not convey the grace of God for the first time to him who comes in contact with the water, conveying it as an efficacy in priestly hands, to remove sin and impart a new nature. "Baptismal regeneration," as a dogma, was an outgrowth of a falsity of redemption. It implied that humanity was hereditarily and totally corrupt. It taught that every man was born wholly in sin by descent from Adam, and that in no sense was there redemption for him except in baptism, where and when only he was born again of the Spirit. It saw no redemption for even unbaptized infants. The unscriptural institution of infant baptism found in this dogma, as seen to-day in certain baptismal services, its unscriptural proof and support. The dogma of baptismal regeneration is possible only as humanity is viewed universally lost in Adam, apart altogether from any redemption in Christ, except as salvation is conveyed to each sinner through the Church in the ministrations and manipulations of duly designated representatives. Salvation, in this view, is strictly and restrictedly sacerdotal, as it necessarily becomes whenever the grace of God and the gift of grace are predicated only of some one specific time or some one specific act. Baptismal regeneration is a huge blunder at understanding the sense in which baptism is really for the remission of sins.

2. Baptism is not for the remission of sins, in the sense of a *mechanical, arbitrary appointment of the Divine will*. This theory of the design of baptism, in its exact notion, is a complete reaction from the dogma of baptismal regeneration. It holds to baptism for the remission of sins. It endeavors to explain and justify the sense in which baptism is for the remission of sins. It has again and again emphatically repudiated baptismal regeneration. It denies any sacramental efficacy in the water. It rejects any necessity of sacerdotal hands. It preaches baptism for the remission of sins only to penitent believers. It insists on the need of a "change of heart" in the sinner before he is baptized. It speaks about faith as changing the heart from a love of sin to a love of holiness, and repentance as expressing the purpose of the mind to break off sins by righteousness, and then, where the sinner has this change of mind and heart, it exhorts him to be baptized in order to the remission of his sins.

The real truth that lies in this theory, especially for its practical uses, as we shall see, is altogether independent of the rationalizings of pulpit and press by which the theory, honestly though mistakenly, has been argued and defended. The mistakes all grow out of the bald notion that baptism is an arbitrary appointment of the Divine will. Starting with this notion, the theory has affirmed that there is salvation for no one in any sense until he is baptized. Shrinking often from this fell conclusion of its logic, it splits a hair of difference, and proceeds to affirm that there is no promise of salvation to responsible hearers of the Gospel until they are baptized. Straightforwardly questioned concerning the status of a penitent believer

stricken in death before baptism, it professes simply ignorance, professedly unable to give any assurance of salvation in the light of God's Word. Straightforwardly questioned concerning the condition of a pious man unbaptized—unbaptized because of an intellectual mistake in the action of baptism, a mistake of the head, not of the heart—it firmly, sometimes grimly, teaches that for him, too, there is no scriptural assurance of salvation whatever until he is baptized. Penitent believers dying unbaptized, and devout believers living unbaptized, it turns over to what it calls "the uncovenanted mercies of God." The landing-place of its logic here seems to be a realm of blank agnosticism, where it contentedly dwells; although, as is the case with every agnosticism of mind and morals, haunted by enough of truth finally to confute and dissolve it, this conclusion apparently forgets that the very phrase, "uncovenanted mercies of God," necessarily involving a real truth for man's good to allow any affirmation at all, carries inevitably the dissolution of its own merciless rationalism.

We need not be further surprised that this theory of baptism, as an arbitrary appointment of the Divine will, like all theories of thought and life where really entertained, works its way sinuously to dread practical results. Under its dire influence, within the year, the elders of a church declined to visit and pray for a dying man, because when he could have been baptized in health and strength, he had not. An extreme instance, we are all, surely, glad to believe. Let us rejoice, too, that it was an extreme instance, never to be repeated, when it was argued in a religious journal of the nineteenth century, whether a child should be taught to

pray before it is old enough to be baptized. All these mistakes, mistakes of theory issuing subtly in mistakes of practice—mistakes about penitent believers too near death to be baptized, about pious believers ignorantly living unbaptized, about children not responsible enough for a scriptural baptism—necessarily flow from the theory of baptism as an arbitrary appointment of the Divine will. The gist of this error is that in baptism, and at baptism only, does the penitent believer for the first time meet the promise of the redemption that is in Christ, here only for the first time the assurance of the forgiveness of sins, here only for the first time the pledge of the grace of God, here only for the first time the guaranty of the benefits of the atonement, here only for the first time the warrant of peace from sin or the hope of eternal life. The true, scriptural sense of baptism for the remission of sins, a sense practical and helpful, explaining the constant, urgent Apostolic word to penitent believers, “Be baptized,” and justifying the constant, prompt obedience of penitent believers in baptism, will be found to harmonize with all the larger lights and varied aspects of the truth of redemption which we have been patiently considering.

6.

THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY OF BAPTISM, IN THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL.

Scripturally, therefore, in the light of the doctrine of redemption, baptism is for the remission of sins.

1. *In the sense of representation.* It is a form, but it represents a reality of God and man. It is a material

element, but it represents a spiritual presence. It is a bodily action, but it represents a spiritual will. It is absurd to classify it with the washings of the Jewish law, "carnal ordinances imposed until a time of reformation" (Heb. ix. 10). It is ignorance to call it "a mere outward rite," or "only an external bodily act," and to put it on the plane with ceremonies of human organizations. Baptism, belonging to the Gospel of truth and grace, is a spiritual institution, representing a spiritual reality of God and man, or it is worse even than a heathen fetich. But, belonging to a spiritual dispensation, it is a spiritual institution representatively, as it both beautifully and helpfully pictures to a penitent believer his salvation in the name of Christ. "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts xxii. 16). So Saul, penitent and praying, hears Ananias's urgent exhortation. The water of his baptism would appropriately represent the washing away of his sins in the blood of Jesus Christ. So, too, in that impressive Scripture, Rom. vi. 1-5, Paul teaches that baptism is a symbol of the death and resurrection of Christ. To be "baptized into Christ" is to be "baptized into his death." The baptism involves a burial, a burial "with him through baptism into death," and to this end, "like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." In both of these Scriptures, where baptism is a representation of salvation—in the first, the material element furnishing the figure; in the second, the bodily action becoming the symbol—the representation is not merely a poetic figure nor an ornamental symbol. It is the representation of salva-

tion in reality—the representation of a real cleansing from sin, the representation of a real death to sin and of a real resurrection to a new life—this spiritual realness alone giving sense and propriety to baptism in its element and action. There is a real presence and power of God in baptism: there is a real spiritual experience of man in baptism. “Having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word” (Eph. v. 26), says Paul again, making baptism a picture of purification, and so representing it because something more than water is there—the very word of God in all its spirit and life being there. “Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col. ii. 12), says the Apostle again, making baptism a figure of burial and resurrection, and so representing it because something more than bodily action is there—the very energy of God, in which the baptized man trusts, being there.

2. *In the sense of confirmation.* It is a form, a material element, a bodily action, but it is the confirmation of the forgiveness of sins. The records of baptisms in the New Testament would be absurd unless, while narrating the regularity, the promptness, the eagerness of the baptisms, they prove directly and indirectly that baptism was to a penitent believer a confirmation of salvation. The Scriptures here carry such an inevitable conviction to the simple reader. It is the wholesale blame of the overwhelming majority of Protestant revivals that in none of them does one hear the like of the New Testament language, not a syllable, not a hint, but a strange silence, as regards the characteristic Apostolic commandments and practices of

baptism. Does Peter command penitent believers to be baptized unto the remission of their sins? "They then that received his word were baptized" (Acts ii. 41). Does Philip go down to Samaria, and preach Christ to the Samaritans? "When they believed Philip preached good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts viii. 12). Does the same evangelist come suddenly on a religious pilgrim, and preach to him Jesus? As he hears the Gospel, believing it, the sight of water evokes an eager request: "Behold, water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts viii. 36). Of every conversion, indeed, in the Apostolic age, could this Scripture be truthfully written: "And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts xviii. 8). In view of the word of the Lord Jesus (Mark xvi. 16), of the commandment of Peter (Acts ii. 38), of the exhortation of Ananias (Acts xxii. 16), all coupling baptism and salvation, and in view of the universally ready, glad obedience of penitent believers in baptism, it unmistakably appears as a real confirmation of a real salvation in a real experience of their lives.

3. *In the sense of association.* It is a form, a material element, a bodily action, but in it is the real association of the salvation of one with the salvation of others, a real association of one in his salvation with others in their salvation, as all together have a real union and communion with God. So reads the great commission, "Make disciples of all the nations," the discipleship, in its making, realizing in baptism the highest fellowship of which man can be capable—"baptizing them into the name of the Father and of

the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. xxviii. 19). Your or my salvation is not in selfish isolation. It is organic, with one another, and through one another. We Gentiles, verily, "are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph. iii. 6). In the true and profound sense, our salvation is in "the Church," which is "the body" of Christ, "the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 23). It is, of course, according to the sound, Protestant idea and against the Roman Catholic notion, our relation to Christ that determines our relation to the Church, not our relation to the Church that determines our relation to Christ; but it would be more accurately scriptural to say that, in our relation to Christ, is determined necessarily our relation to the Church. The salvation in Christ is a fellowship of salvation, and it is a fellowship of salvation according as He is "himself the Saviour of the body" (Eph. v. 23). This principle of association is impressively stated by Paul as regards baptism. To be baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, to be baptized into Jesus Christ, to be baptized into His death, to be baptized into His name, carries in it an association of the blessings of salvation. "For in one Spirit," says Paul impressively, giving the necessary reason of the organic relation of the redeemed, and stating first the vital, spiritual element which enveloped them when baptized, "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit" (I. Cor. xii. 12, 13). Salvation thus viewed as a blessing organically, in a body, in a Church, in a kingdom, is

taught by our Lord in His startling words to Nicodemus. The note of a spiritual salvation He unmistakably gives along with the note of a baptism in water, which associates the salvation of one with the salvation of others in the kingdom of God—"Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he can not enter the kingdom of God" (John iii. 5). It is of those who received the word of Peter, and were baptized, that the fact is immediately narrated: "And there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls" (Acts ii. 41); and this significant predicate, "added unto them," has the light of its vital meaning a little further on in the verse, "And the Lord added to them," or "together," "day by day those that were being saved" (Acts ii. 47). The association of penitent believers by baptism was in a process of salvation.

4. *In the sense of consummation.* According to the Apostolic ministry, it was penitent believers that were baptized. It was not unconscious infants. It was not unawakened sinners. Baptism was not the first and only step in the way of salvation. Again and again, in varied ways, are hearing, faith, repentance, confession, mentioned as facts in the way of salvation. In no one aspect is salvation moving to a consummation more strikingly set forth than in the doctrine of it as a conversion, especially now in the accurate renderings of the Revised Version. The Scriptures speak of turning, and becoming as little children (Matt. xviii. 3), of perceiving with the eyes, hearing with the ears, understanding with the heart, and turning again to be healed (Matt. xiii. 15), of believing and turning to the Lord (Acts xi. 21), of repenting and turning to God (Acts xxvi. 20); but the Scriptures never speak of be-

ing baptized and turning. For a very apparent reason. Hearing, understanding, believing, repenting, each of these implied in some general mention of conversion (Acts ix. 35 ; Thess. i. 9), while again spoken of specifically, now one, now another, in connection with conversion, leaving yet some aspect of conversion to be explained beyond hearing, beyond understanding, beyond faith, beyond repentance, simply, according to Apostolic teaching and practice, leaves baptism as the final step, the final fact, of conversion. Fully confirming this sense of the consummation of salvation in baptism, is the fact that salvation is so specifically mentioned with faith, repentance, confession, viewed as steps in the way of salvation. The Scriptures are numerous. "Every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43). "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name" (Luke xxiv. 47). "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x. 10). The Scriptures are numerous, various, emphatic—too many to be indicated here—faith and salvation, repentance unto life, confession and union with God. But are we to think that the Scriptures speak in vain when they say in so many words, "Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism" (I. Pet. iii. 21)? If with faith, with repentance, with confession, salvation is connected, these going before baptism, and if with baptism also, coming after these, salvation is coupled, then salvation must have in baptism a real, not a fictitious, consummation, and this consummation is real because salvation has a real, not a fictitious, relation to faith, repentance, confession, as the antecedents of baptism.

At this point, therefore, the sense of baptism for the remission of sins may distinctly and roundedly appear in the Biblical light of redemption. In view of the induction of Scriptures, and in view of these four definitions, this sense may be clearly seen in its own rational and real meaning, as against all error of theory, and in harmony with the whole truth of the Gospel.

It is an error to view or preach baptism for the remission of sins as meaning that there is no reality of salvation for one until one is baptized, no promise of salvation, no assurance of salvation, in any real sense, for one except in one's baptism. It surely would be one man out of ten thousand, at least in Protestant Christendom, who, because the Scriptures teach baptism for the remission of sins, would straightway work his logical abilities to prove that infants dying unbaptized, die unsaved ; or, if he should shrink from this appalling conclusion concerning infants, would stiffen his logic to prove it as regards the adult heathen. But it is just as erroneous, scripturally, to affirm that the penitent believer, who has also confessed his Saviour and Lord, has no salvation, no promise of it, no assurance of it, in any real sense, until he is baptized. The lamentable unscripturalness of such a position, whether of essay or sermon, by whomsoever affirmed, strikingly betrays itself when the effort is made, in the spirit of mercy, to find some reason, confessedly out of the Scriptures, for the salvation of the penitent believer who, not willfully, lives or dies without baptism. The very spirit that insists so strongly on the chapter and verse of Scripture for every proof of the will of God concerning man, precipitates itself into the baldest rationalism by endeavoring to separate salvation

and the promise of salvation, by begging the question in such a phrase as "the uncovenanted mercies of God," or becoming still more rationalistic and agnostic in arguing upon what it calls "the general principles of God's government."

This error, as we shall see in the next and concluding articles of our study, has been an incident of a mighty historical reaffirmation of baptism for the remission of sins in the Apostolic practicalness of that doctrine. The error, as we shall see, has had its growth, sometimes a rank growth, in the exigencies of theological controversy. The whole trouble of it, as may be seen right here, is in the false method of interpreting the relation of baptism to faith, repentance, confession, with each of which salvation is mentioned. According to this method, although salvation is mentioned sometimes with faith, sometimes with repentance, sometimes with confession, yet, as it is mentioned also with baptism, which is the consequent of these, the conclusion is strangely reached that of these antecedents of baptism salvation, therefore, can not be predicated as in any sense a real possession, but really and only as these antecedents lead up to baptism, where and when is the first reality of the forgiveness of sins, only and really in promise and assurance there. The method rightly emphasizes the death of Christ as the ground of our salvation, the necessity of heartfelt faith and repentance, what it calls "a change of heart"; but it sees no real reception of salvation by the penitent believer in scriptural promise or assurance until he is baptized.

The error is a wholly gratuitous one, on its very face, in its presuming to empty faith, repentance, con-

fession, of all possession of salvation except as they are joined with baptism. It is not an exposition of the Scriptures that teach faith, repentance, confession, baptism, in connection with salvation. It is the unconscious imposition of a rationalistic logic upon these Scriptures. If the Scriptures teach faith and salvation, repentance and salvation, confession and salvation, baptism and salvation, it is simply a rationalistic logic that, for instance, argues all sense of salvation out of faith so mentioned, and argues salvation of faith only and really in possession as faith expresses itself in baptism. The true reading of these Scriptures, as one reads of faith and salvation, for instance the Scripture, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is not straightway to deny any possession of salvation to the Philippian jailer until a little later he was baptized, to deny this because another Scripture says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." No; the true reading of each of the Scriptures is to read a reality of salvation for the jailer as he believed, and to read a reality of salvation for him as he was baptized, the relation of his faith, small as a mustard seed, to his salvation, a real one, the relation of his baptism, in bodily form, element, action, to his salvation, a real one, both his faith and his baptism spiritual verities of his life, in each and in both for him the realization of the redemption that is in Christ, whatever be the varied though harmonious senses in which faith and baptism, respectively, are viewed as really related to salvation.

Again, the error has notably emphasized itself in the mechanical sense which it has associated with the

Scripture phrase, "the remission of sins." It has not merely looked at "the remission of sins" as a true description of salvation, truly so as regards the sins of the past and their burden on the conscience, and set forth this as a blessing of salvation. But here again the error, in all its rationalizing tendency, has had its perfect work. The "remission of sins" has been abstracted from its vital place in the redemption that is in Christ, demonstrably disconnected from the Scriptures that speak of it so livingly along with ethical motives and spiritual character, and preached, illustrated, proved in the light of governmental analogies, legal procedures, social expedients, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to the Gospel of Christ as a real power of the living God in human life. It is this phase of the error that has done the most in finding and affirming the virtual negative, which denies that, in the Scriptures, there is any reality of salvation for the antecedents of baptism, and asserts salvation as a real possession only of the penitent believer baptized. Salvation has been viewed abstractly as "the remission of sins," and the remission has been preached abstractly as a judicial pronouncement of God upon the baptized believer. One of the frequent emphases has been that this forgiveness or pardon takes place in the mind of God, not in the heart of the sinner. In this light the remission of sins has no vital, necessary association, previously to baptism, with the man's consciousness of a spiritual renewal of heart and mind, whether looking to the sins of the past or the duties of the future. There may be a genuine change of mind and heart inwardly, sorrow for sin, the strong will to do better, a warm love of the Saviour; still,

according to this theory, there is no salvation, in a real, scriptural assurance, until one, thus believing and repenting, is baptized for the remission of sins. Such logic easily then has its perfect work. With this sense of salvation, abstractly and only, as the remission of sins, it abstracts salvation in any real sense from faith or repentance or confession. It denies salvation to these as at all a reality of spiritual consciousness until they, as antecedents, have had their consequent in what the logic has frequently called an arbitrary appointment of the Divine will, namely, baptism. Indeed, this rationalizing has professed to arise to the dignity of a philosophy of the question, in that, while proving salvation to be promised really in an objective act, and in no sense to be a reality in previous subjective changes of mind and heart, though these must take place beforehand, it thus proves salvation to be all the more of grace, and not of merit!

To state such errors is practically to refute them. They grow out of a rationalizing habit. We shall be delivered from them as we understand salvation in all its real, vital, scriptural meaning. Salvation, undoubtedly, has, in the Scriptures, varied aspects. Even so. But it is always a spiritual reality, never a mere abstraction, in any Scripture where it is mentioned. Wherever predicated, whether in the energy of God or in the experience of man, there it is real, whatever be the aspect, the stage, the growth, the status, the process, the season, the fullness.

As we read Scripture after Scripture that speaks of salvation manward, we see how real it is for him and in him, at his every experience of its influence. In his very first hearing of it, in view of his sin and need,

he heard what was real for him and in him. "Having heard the word of truth," says Paul in the Scripture that sets forth the eternal purpose and work of God in redemption, "having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Eph. i. 13). It was real for men and in men as, hearing the Gospel of their salvation, each one realized his salvation more and more as a personal experience, in a growing, active faith (Eph. ii. 8-10; Gal. v. 6; Jas. ii. 22), or in a deepening repentance (Acts xvi. 33; xxvi. 20). It was real for those and in those who, with the mouth, confessed Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ—their Saviour, their Teacher, their Lord (Rom. x. 9, 10; I. John iv. 2). The salvation predicated of the penitent believer in the Scriptures is not a fictitious salvation, not an emptily figurative salvation, not a merely prospective salvation. It is real as a change of mind, a renewal of the heart, a reinvigoration of the will. That clear conviction of sin, that heartfelt persuasion of Christ as a Saviour, that willingness to do God's will, all this inward renovation, the work of the Spirit of truth in His strivings with men, mean salvation as a present reality. Such a spiritual renewal of the springs of one's being, such a spiritual transformation of the courses of one's life, are possible only as a real redemption wrought for men and working really in man, according as he receives it. Thought by thought, feeling by feeling, will by will, as the influence of the word of the truth of the Gospel works duly in him, it is the Gospel of his salvation—an ethical reality in every touch of every experience, never an abstraction of logic. It can but be real, where of one such penitent believer a fact of spiritual experience is noteworthy told, "Behold, he

prayeth" (Acts ix. 11). It can but be real where an unbeliever may be so convicted in the assembly of the saints that then and there he may "fall down on his face and worship God, declaring that God is in" them "indeed" (I. Cor. xiv. 25). It can but be real if to children already belongs the kingdom of God, which they may receive according to the parental nurturing of them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord (Luke xviii. 16; Eph. vi. 4).

In each and all of these aspects and experiences manward, salvation is real, because in it is present always its force and fact as a spiritual influence in life. It is salvation from sin and unto righteousness. It saves one from the sin of the past, which burdens the conscience. It saves one from the sin of the present, which clouds the mind, and entices the heart, and enslaves the will. But it is then immediately and always a salvation for righteous living and spiritual character. So real, vital, powerful, ethically and spiritually, is the blood of Jesus Christ as shed for the remission of sins. Thus real and vital, in its breadth and depth, is the Scripture idea of salvation taught as the remission of sins. And baptism, therefore, neither magically nor mechanically, but really is for the remission of sins. Into baptism descends the adult Philippian jailer, out of a hard heathen life; and into baptism descends the child Timothy, knowing the Scriptures and loving and practicing righteousness from his cradle. Both were baptized for the remission of their sins. The jailer and the child both needed the redemption that is in Christ. They both had always experienced, as they would to their dying day experience, the conflict inevitable from the presence of evil in man. The jailer

had sinned. The child had sinned. Both needed a righteousness not their own. The jailer heard it now plainly for the first time. The child had been taught it from the cradle in the prophetic light that grew more and more to the sunlit day of Gospel grace and glory. To them both their baptism was for the remission of their sins. It represented their salvation. In it their salvation was confirmed. It associated them in salvation. In it their salvation was consummated. A reality already in the jailer's repentance, as he tenderly washed the prisoner's stripes before he was baptized; a reality beforehand in the child's faith, as he loved God, and learned of the Messiah to come, it was thus and more a reality, growing, deepening, filling their lives, as they were baptized.

For, baptism unto the remission of sins in the sense of a representation, a confirmation, an association, and, above all, a consummation of salvation, is such, and especially a consummation, as the baptized man is still in process of being saved. His baptism looks before and after. As already noted, those whom "the Lord added together day by day" by baptism, were "those that were being saved" (Acts ii. 47). Their baptism was a consummation of salvation, and still their baptism became, in Apostolic teaching, a main-spring of good in a process of salvation. "But ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (I. Cor. vi. 11), is the congratulation of Paul to his Corinthian converts, in view of the riches of salvation in their baptism. "According to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. iii.

5), is the Apostolic teaching of a salvation through baptism, which continues, still a process, under the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit. "For as many as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Gal. iii. 27), is Paul's proof of a sonship to God, through faith in Christ Jesus. But to believers who put on Christ in baptism the exhortation still is given, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. xiii. 14). "Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism" (I. Pet. iii. 21), so vividly does Peter represent salvation in baptism, since its effect flows on in the reality and activity of a good conscience toward God. "Unto obedience of faith among all the nations" (Rom. i. 5), "made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith" (Rom. xvi. 26), such is the end of the Gospel of grace—not only faith, but an obedient faith, which, according to a multitude of Scriptures, becomes a witness of salvation (Rom. vi. 17; Heb. xi.); not only faith, but a faith energetic in works, and by works made perfect, which so is reckoned for righteousness (Jas. ii. 14-26). The process of salvation is in process of one's obedience, where truly baptism may be called an obedience of faith. It is not so to be called in an exclusive sense, viewed as an arbitrary appointment where God only and really saves the penitent believer by a judicial pronouncement of pardon exhaustively called the remission of sins. It is an obedience of faith, even as the good confession is such an obedience, or one's worthy work of washing wounded men's stripes before one's baptism. Baptism is an obedience of faith, in which there is real salvation, as one's obedience before baptism or in baptism or after baptism, each and all, really receive and really express

the righteousness of God in one's life and character.

Thus real is salvation manward, according to the Scriptures, as man receives it in the obedience of faith—in his hearing, his believing, his repenting, his confessing, his being baptized—because, as we have seen all along, and may now appreciate the doctrine better than ever, this salvation has an eternal purpose and process in the will of God. The salvation of each one, as God chooses him, as he believes and knows the truth which makes for godliness, has the "hope of eternal life, which God, who can not lie, promised before times eternal; but in his own seasons manifested his word in the message" (Tit. i. 1-3). It is God who saves, and He "saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, but hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought light and incorruption to light through the Gospel" (II. Tim. i. 9, 10). The promise of eternal life "before times eternal," the gift of grace in Christ "before times eternal"—this sound doctrine we are not to belittle by any narrow Calvinistic interpretation. Nor are we to dilute it in any loose Universalism. Nor are we to rationalize it by vague Arminian methods. We are to receive it in all its light of a purpose, process, promise of salvation for all men on the part of God, according as He "is," not will be, "the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe" (I. Tim. iv. 10). It is the reality of the eternal redemption that is in Christ, a purpose of God toward men, a power of God in men, a

promise of God for men. Whoever hears the Gospel, hears indeed the Gospel of his salvation (Eph. i. 13), obtained for all men by the sacrifice of Christ (Heb. ix. 26-28), and preached "unto all the nations unto obedience of faith" (Rom. xvi. 26). Because it is a Gospel of world-wide grace, superabounding over all sin (Rom. v. 20); because it is a Gospel of world-wide purpose and power, "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses" (II. Cor. v. 19), the responsibility of men is forever focused in a burning light. As they hear the Gospel of their salvation, so real, so free, so clear, so near, in their mouths and in their hearts (Rom. x. 8), their conviction of sin will be that they believe not on their Saviour (John xvi. 8-10). As they hear the Gospel of their salvation, so real, so free, so near, in their mouths and in their hearts, if they thrust it from them, their terrible guilt is that they judge themselves "unworthy of eternal life" (Acts xiii. 46). As they hear the Gospel of their salvation, so real, so free, so near, in their mouths and in their hearts, it becomes, as they appropriate it, "a savor from life unto life"; as they reject it, "a savor from death unto death" (II. Cor. ii. 16). It is the reality, the freeness, the nearness of the salvation of the Gospel, as preached and heard, that make it sweetly reasonable for the penitent believer willingly and eagerly to be baptized unto the remission of his sins, and to chant thereafter, as a memory and motive in his spiritual life, "I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins."

7.

A HISTORICAL REAFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM FOR THE
REMISSION OF SINS, AND THE LESSONS.

The nineteenth century has seen a remarkable reaffirmation of the note of the old Nicene Creed, "one baptism for the remission of sins." The reaffirmation began in a truly critical need. It has been a clear reaffirmation, and persistent, courageous, triumphant. Thousands upon thousands of preachers of the Gospel have proclaimed the old Apostolic commandment, "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts ii. 38), and hundreds and thousands of penitent believers have been so baptized, and have gone on their way rejoicing. It has been such a re-affirmation of the Apostolic doctrine as will never again, in the mission of the Gospel, be practically lost in silence. It came at such a critical time, it edified such a critical need, demonstrating itself as irrefutably scriptural and catholic, proving itself so spiritual and helpful, that henceforth baptism unto the remission of sins will more and more have its note in all true preaching of the Gospel, and be confessed by all who endeavor to hold fast the pattern of sound words. It is the crisis of this re-affirmation, what called it forth, what justified it, what illuminated it, what made it scripturally powerful notwithstanding misapprehension and unscriptural defenses of it, that will teach us anew the rightful place of baptism for the remission of sins in the Biblical doctrine of redemption, and enable us to preach it all the more convincingly in right divisions of the Word of truth.

This was the crisis. The facts may have a true focus thus. A revival meeting was going on. Preach-

ers were convicting sinners of their sins. Many, in fears and tears, were inquiring the way of salvation. The answer chiefly was, Mourn on; wait; pray. And sinners did mourn on, often in agonies of distress for days and weeks. They waited a long, weary time. They prayed for themselves, and others prayed for them. Some at last, according to the religious slang of the age, "got through," or "got religion," or were "gloriously converted." The proof of it was *how they felt*. For this feeling they had mourned, wept, waited, prayed. They were taught that it was a very distinct feeling, a certain sensation, the only proof of regeneration, of sound conversion, of saving faith. Thousands testified that they had it, and many a time they told of getting it in electric shocks, amid marvelous sights and sounds, in wonderful experiences of noontide solitude or midnight prayer. But, alas! there were many who, with all their tears and supplications, failed to get such an experience, and went away from the "mourner's bench" confirmed infidels; and, strange to say, not a few even of those that professed such an experience, yet losing it or having it only fitfully, walked in doubts, and wondered where was the blessedness once they knew.

This is the condensed statement of a paragraph. The proofs of the truthfulness of it are legion. They may be read in the records of the pens of men now dead. They may be heard from lips of many a man still living. Such facts made the pathos and romance especially of American pioneer history as, whether in mistake or in truth, Christ was preached in camp and cabin, amid Virginia slashes, or through Kentucky forests, or over Hoosier prairies. In the religious re-

vivals of our West and South, in scores of times in scores of years, wherever the Gospel of the grace of God was professedly preached, this was the preaching, this was the effect, that salvation is a feeling to be had only in the pains of prayer, and that a multitude of souls waited on their knees, in sad suspense, for the salvation of God.

In this crisis, the old Apostolic commandment was heard, "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins." Hundreds of other preachers came along, and wherever they found a Gentile anxious to be saved, believing in his heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and willing to cut off his sins by righteousness, they exhorted him, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." It was on the waiting souls of penitent believers that the old Apostolic doctrine burst like a finer light in light. There it was, unmistakably, in the Word of God, in the Book of the Acts, the great book of conversions. These preachers had found it again so easily, to reaffirm it so seasonably, because of their very attitude toward the Word of God. They were free from all infections of theological prejudice. They were emancipated from all tyranny of ecclesiastical traditions. They acknowledged no dogmatic system as the unchangeable, authoritative interpretation of the Bible. They were exalting the Word of God above all man-made creeds, and were nobly advocating Christian union on the Bible alone as the authority of faith and practice.

Such a right use of the Word of God, in, above all, such a noble plea for Christian union, was bound to

bring forth on more than one thing scriptural teaching and scriptural practice, against prevalent heresies and errors. It was just as inevitable, therefore, that these men would reject infant baptism as unscriptural, as that they would reaffirm baptism for the remission of sins. What distinguishes the reaffirmation, was that it came in a crisis. It was the crisis of a great need. It was a crisis of immortal souls. It was a crisis of sensitive hearts. While Christ was magnified as the only and all-sufficient Saviour, the sinner was in lack of light in which to receive the assurance of salvation. What light was professedly seen, was notoriously doubtful and fitful for many; while others, penitent and anxious, sat in darkness. Upon tens of thousands the light, the full, unclouded light of the Gospel, gloriously arose. It was for many a benighted man and woman the dawn of a new day. It was the light of the assurance of salvation. It was according to the Acts of the Apostles. In that book, the book of conversions, how sinners were saved under Apostolic doctrine, said these preachers over and over, we read of no prolonged mourning for salvation, no weary waiting for salvation, no proofs of salvation only in certain mystical feelings, no uncertainties of salvation, never a disappointment of salvation to any one sincerely inquiring. No, said these men of God, with all the enthusiasm that a true man of God has in edifying a human need with the truth of God's Word, we always, in the Acts of the Apostles, read of a salvation clear, near, sure, in the promise of God, for penitent believers baptized.

Thousands and tens of thousands that received this Word were, of course, baptized. All along they knew

in their hearts that they were sorry for their sins, and were anxious to be saved. They knew and felt their need of a Saviour, in the piercing convictions of the Spirit of truth. They believed all that the Gospel taught of Him as an all-sufficient Saviour. But they were told, in a mystifying way, that this was "only historical faith"; they had not yet "exercised saving faith"; they must still wait and pray for "the experience of the Spirit in 'the heart,'" an experience more and other than any influence of the Gospel as heard, separate from any instrumentality of truth whatever; they must look for this mysterious action of the Spirit of God in their souls, apart from the word of the truth of the Gospel, as "the feeling sense of pardon." It was in this crisis, historically, that multitudes, convicted of sin, heartily repenting, heartily believing the Word of God, yet unassured of salvation, taught to wait and pray for something else still as a proof of salvation, tarried no longer when they understood the full Apostolic Gospel, but arose, and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins.

Such a historical reaffirmation of baptism for the remission of sins, edifying such a critical need, has done a lasting good. The lessons of this good read two ways. It abides as, more and more, a potent corrective of popular errors in religious revivals. It will outlive the very erroneous ways in which those that discovered the practical helpfulness of baptism for the remission of sins, have often presented the doctrine to the people. The lessons of the abiding good of this Scripture doctrine, thus notably reaffirmed, are to be read both against the errors of its opponents and the mistakes of its advocates.

For, as regards the errors of the opponents of the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins, the gist of their error was *the absolute mysteriousness of salvation*. Salvation was of God in the sense that, in man's reception of it, man was wholly passive in prayer, receiving salvation assuredly altogether apart from any instrumentality whatever. Not only was man to do nothing for his salvation, but he could not even believe except as faith was wrought in him as a gift by the immediate, irresistible, wholly inexplicable action of the Spirit of God. Baptism as in any sense related to salvation, was, of course, nowhere in view. One's faith might speak its conviction of the need of salvation, and its willingness to accept salvation in the promise of God; but this, as already noted, was only "historical faith," not "saving faith." Such doctrine, when fully fledged, necessarily opposed "getting up a revival," or "teaching religion to children," or "carrying the Gospel to the heathen." The mighty reaffirmation of baptism for the remission of sins smote like light upon such an error. It showed not only that the great commission of the Gospel read, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," but that this believing required by the Gospel came by hearing the Gospel (Acts xviii. 8; Rom. x. 14-17). It showed from a host of Scriptures that, while the Spirit of God did a work of convicting men of sin and begetting in them a new life, He convinced them of sin with the Word of God as a sword (Eph. vi. 17; Heb. iv. 12), and begot in them a new life with the Word of God as seed (Luke viii. 11; I. Pet. i. 23). It necessarily, therefore, whenever men, hearing the Gospel, received the Word in their hearts as the truth of God,

exhorted such penitent believers, on the authority of Christ, to be baptized for the remission of their sins. The practical helpfulness of baptism for the remission of sins was the necessary result of the scriptural rationality of heartfelt faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God.

It is very plain these days that the old error of the absolute mysteriousness of salvation, as once held and preached, is fast clearing away in the scriptural light of the rationality of a spiritual faith in God and Christ. A great many preachers may not yet preach an assurance of salvation in baptism to penitent believers. They may not yet exhort a penitent believer to arise and be baptized, and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord. But they do preach faith as a responsibility for sinners. They—typically a Moody, a Whittle, a Pentecost, a Mills—do warn sinners not to wait, not to trust to their feelings for a proof of pardon, but to believe in Christ as a Saviour on the authority of God's Word. Silent as they are about baptism, they preach a salvation of grace, free for all, to be accepted by a heartfelt faith in the simple promise of the Gospel, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31).

But, as regards the mistakes of the advocates of the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins, the gist of their mistake was *the restriction of the promise of salvation to baptism*. It was reading a negation into the Scriptures where there is not a syllable of it. They fell into the mistake amid the exigencies of hot controversy. Holding and preaching the Apostolic commandment to penitent believers, "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the re-

mission of your sins," these men of God, while rejoicing to see the practical good of the doctrine, frequently rationalized the doctrine in their enthusiastic advocacy of it. Their mistakes of advocacy were incidents occasioned by their intensely practical aim to meet a crying need of thousands to whom they preached. They found a sinner in tears and prayer, really sorry for his sins, really believing the truth of the Gospel concerning a salvation of light and love. Other preachers were telling him to mourn on, and to pray for a saving faith apart from the testimony of the Gospel: there could be no pardon nor peace in simple historical faith, penitent and heartfelt though it be. There was the crisis. There was the issue. Unmistakably the Gospel said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." These men of God practically read that promise, they practically preached it—the promise of salvation to one who was baptized in possession of a heartfelt faith, in confession of a heartfelt faith, whenever and wherever produced through the preaching of the Gospel, the faith that Jesus Christ is Saviour and Lord.

The exigency of the controversy is plain enough. The opponents of baptism for the remission of sins decried a faith produced through the preaching of the Gospel, heartfelt though it be. The advocates of baptism for the remission of sins defended such a faith, and urged it on to baptism. It was the crisis, the issue, whether a heartfelt faith should wait and pray on, or whether it should go on to baptism. It was the crisis, the issue, whether a heartfelt faith should wait in prayer for the promise of salvation, or should be baptized in the assurance of salvation. The truth of the old Apostolic doctrine triumphed; but the mistake

of its advocates was right on the heels of victory. The opponents of baptism for the remission of sins said, No salvation for faith except such as is wrought apart from the truth of the Gospel, by an altogether different agency and method. The advocates of baptism for the remission of sins, in their practical eagerness (he that has read of the progress of truth will understand), stumbled into affirming the unscriptural negative, There is salvation in promise only when one, having this heartfelt faith in hearing the Gospel, is baptized. The rationalizing subtly crept in, as, finding the penitent believer mournfully waiting, and hard sometimes to be convinced of the error of waiting for an extraordinary proof of pardon, they urgently exhorted him not to tarry, but, having such a genuine faith, to be baptized. As their opponent found no assurance of salvation in what he called "only historical faith," vitally personal and heartfelt though it be, *so they were unconsciously driven, between the opponent's stout error and some poor penitent believer's confusion and halting, to argue to him as well as to exhort: and the argument was, this very heartfelt faith has no assurance of salvation until upon confession of it you are baptized.*

The mistake of the advocates of baptism for the remission of sins was in not reading the beginning of salvation which the Scriptures affirm of a vital, personal faith produced in hearing the Gospel. Their opponent was wrong in slurring such a faith, and demanding what he called another kind of faith. They were right in preaching that such a faith was ready for baptism, and that to such a penitent believer there was the promise of salvation in his baptism. They rationalized, however, the instant they denied the assurance

of salvation at all to any until baptized. The true scriptural course was to see, in any heart warm with love for the Saviour, turned from love of sin to love of righteousness, willing to obey the Gospel, the presence of a living faith, in which already there was the promise of salvation. They would have had a double refutation of the opponent of baptism for the remission of sins. They would have vindicated more strongly the scriptural reality of a vital, personal faith produced in hearing the Gospel, and, while elucidating better the practical and helpful sense in which the penitent believer is baptized unto the remission of his sins, would not have had the trouble of a self-imposed agnosticism as to the fate of a penitent believer dying in simple lack of baptism. They could have preached all the more powerfully that although, in the Scriptures, the lack of baptism condemns no one, yet the contempt and rejection of baptism will condemn any one; for in the lack of baptism through ignorance or accident there may still be a genuine faith in Christ as Saviour, while the contempt and rejection of baptism mean the disobedience that springs from a disbelieving heart. Such straightforward doctrine, not making the mistake of restricting the promise of salvation to baptism, would have been the sound interpretation and application of the Scripture, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark xvi. 16).

8.

A HISTORICAL REAFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM FOR
THE REMISSION OF SINS, AND THE LESSONS.

The opponents of baptism for the remission of sins committing their capital mistake in affirming the absolute mysteriousness of salvation, it was inevitable that, in representing the office and work of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of man, their teaching should become a tangle of errors from beginning to end. According to this teaching, the sinner was dead in trespasses and in sins—so dead that it called for a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, apart from all other agency or instrumentality, before he could hear and believe savingly. It was the other side of the doctrine that man is born totally depraved, and that there is no redemption for him or in him, in any exercise of a rational and moral constitution, until this visitation of the Spirit of God independently of all secondary methods or means. We need not pause to amuse ourselves, dialectically, over the contradictions of this theory. It is the serious practical results of it that claim our attention. These are facts of history. The sinner, although totally dead in sin, was exhorted to kneel at the mourner's bench and to pray for himself, while others prayed for him, that the Holy Spirit would come down and regenerate him in that passive condition wholly apart from any influence of the Gospel of truth. It was called a baptism of the Spirit. The prayer was for a copious baptism of the Spirit, a Pentecostal shower of blessing, an outpouring of the Holy Ghost on mourning sinners, that they might be saved. Salvation would come, so it was taught, in such passive waiting, and the sign would be a certain feeling, a pe-

culiar sensation, called the witness of the Spirit in the heart as a unique experience realized without the instrumentality of the preached Word. Many were the marvelous stories told how this "feeling sense of pardon" came in such direct operations of the Spirit; and, alas! many were the suspenses, the disappointments, the agonies of others who knelt and prayed, and wondered if God had forgotten to be gracious to needy, inquiring sinners.

Here, again, the advocates of baptism for the remission of sins swept field after field in victory, a phalanx of preachers armed with the truth of God; and again is there for us the lesson how the truth mightily triumphs in the preaching of the Gospel, notwithstanding now and then the mistakes made in doctrine and advocacy. These teachers and advocates, equally admitting and affirming the grace and presence of God in all true conversion, preached that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every believer. They struck hard at the theory that salvation is a miracle, wrought in a sinner independent of his faith, and producing his faith apart from the Word of truth. Teaching that faith comes by hearing (Acts xviii. 8; Rom. x. 17), they proclaimed the very first responsibility of man to hear the Gospel of light and love. They vigorously denied that the Word of God is, in any sense, "a dead letter." They affirmed that it is "living and active," convicting, renewing, sanctifying, saving (Heb. x. 12; Acts ii. 37; I. Pet. i. 23; Jas. i. 21). They were simply invincible, both by the teaching and the examples of conversion in the New Testament, in pressing home upon the sinner his responsibility to hear and believe the preached Word, without

passively waiting for a miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit accomplished aside from all instrumentality. They were simply unanswerable in their proof that nowhere in the Book of the Acts, the great book of conversions, is there an instance that a sinner was taught to do nothing but pray and wait for a baptism of the Spirit as the sign of his salvation. They had chapter and verse, irrefutable, that the inquirer who, hearing, believed, was exhorted to repent and be baptized, not only for the remission of sins, but for the gift of the Holy Spirit, the possession of the Holy Spirit a result of the obedience of faith (Acts ii. 38; v. 32; Gal. iv. 6; Eph. i. 13, 14).

These mighty preachers, however, encumbered their doctrine along this line of conflict also by the notion that, scripturally, the promise of salvation is restricted to baptism. They did not, they could not, do full justice to the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in redemption. They rationalized again in their interpretation and use of certain Scriptures. We need not stop to recall certain extreme utterances that augmented the din of controversy. These were exceptional. It is rather the high honor of these men of God that, notwithstanding the heat and smoke of theological debate, they, with consummate tact in the practical knowledge of the Bible, pointed to the clearings in which the truth of the Gospel shone luminously in its directions of the sinner's steps to the assurance of salvation. But here again, rightly preaching that the power of God is in the Gospel, rightly warning the sinner not to wait for a miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit in order to believe savingly, rightly proclaiming the gift of the Holy Spirit to the penitent

believer baptized, they erred in denying that there was any real, conscious blessing of the Spirit for the penitent believer until his baptism. The rationalizing was notably practiced in the common argument about the Scripture doctrine of baptism in the Holy Spirit. According to their interpretation, the baptism in the Holy Spirit was purely a miracle, and occurred only twice, on the day of Pentecost and at the conversion of Cornelius (Acts ii., x., xi.). Occurring thus twice, it wholly ceased.

Here the mistake was occasioned evidently by the exclusive emphasis of the promise of salvation, and any privilege of the Spirit as a personal possession, as connected only with baptism in water. It was inevitable that the advocates of baptism for the remission of sins, remission thus restricted, should rationalize such a predicate of Scripture as "baptized in the Holy Spirit." They gave the phrase, "baptism in the Spirit," a restricted, technical, mechanical, exclusive sense. There was, so they affirmed, no other mention of the Spirit in presence and work that, scripturally, could be a synonym with "baptism in the Spirit." Their failure was in not appreciating the free, fluent, concrete style of Scripture language generally, and just as truly as regards the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in redemption. Scripturally, baptism in the Spirit is a vivid and striking figure, a supreme emphasis, of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in redemption. Scripturally, it is an impressive description of His mighty, His energetic, His pervasive, His continuous presence and influence personally in the Gospel of salvation. The doctrine of salvation is sublime, when Peter cites the prophecy of Joel as fulfilled

in the sights and sounds of the day of Pentecost (Acts ii.), "I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh." Such unlimited language can be limited only by a rationalizing process unjust to the Word of God. We are not to feel called upon straightway to limit it because of accompaniments of miraculous dreams and visions and tongues. These were but accompaniments of the baptism in the Spirit. They were not exhaustive signs of it. Other free, fluent Scriptures concerning the Holy Spirit forbid such a technical interpretation. "Which he poured upon us richly," says Paul, speaking of the Holy Spirit where he also speaks of God's mercy in saving us "through the washing of regeneration" (Tit. iii. 4-6). Nay, the Scripture expressly says, "In one Spirit were we all baptized into one body" (I. Cor. xii. 13). Verily, it is sheer rationalizing, however unconscious, to explain away this explicit Scripture as in no sense teaching a baptism in one Spirit that is also a baptism into one body. There is undoubtedly "one baptism." It is, scripturally, a baptism in water: but it is, scripturally, also a baptism in the Spirit. There is a presence and power of the Holy Spirit after baptism. There is a presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the penitent believer in baptism. There is a presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the penitent believer before baptism. Where Peter sees the prophecy fulfilled both on Jew and Gentile, on two notable occasions, amid miraculous accompaniments, the facts become doctrine true not only in Jerusalem and Cæsarea, but in Thessalonica and wherever runs the Word of the Lord. "God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth," says Paul to the

Gentiles of Thessalonica (II. Thess. ii. 13). "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," says Peter to the Jews of the Dispersion (I. Pet. i. 1, 2). "In sanctification of the Spirit"—it is the interpretative note of Peter's own vision where God taught the Apostle the blessing of salvation for the Gentiles—"What God hath cleansed, make not thou common" (Acts x. 15). It is the proof-text phrase of the personal presence and influence of the Holy Spirit, livingly and continuously, in the progress of the Gospel. It is the influence that convicts the world "of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John xvi. 8); and while the world in impenitence and disobedience can not receive it, yet wherever there is the tear of godly sorrow or the heart-throb of faith, there is the Holy Spirit in presence and blessing. It is not a presence to be waited for by the sinner in passive anxiety; it is a presence to be received as fast as a heart of faith will open to its influence. It is not a presence to be denied to a penitent believer in any sense for personal possession and joy, until he is baptized in water. It is on him and in him before his baptism, and in his baptism, and after his baptism. For thus could the Apostle exhort those that had already received the gift of the Holy Spirit in baptism, "Be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. v. 18); and thus he could behold the presence of the Spirit in one's baptism which would become a larger measure of blessing in the obedience of faith—"For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit" (I. Cor. xii. 13).

Thus the errors of the opponents of baptism for the remission of sins have been surely dissipated, while the mistakes of the advocates of the old Apostolic doctrine, occasioned by the errors nevertheless scripturally refuted, will soon have had their day, and cease to be. It is, indeed, the final lesson of the truth of baptism for the remission of sins that the truth will shine more and more clearly, and be more scripturally and more helpfully preached, as the past mistakes in advocating it become less and less possible. Already these mistakes are no longer heard in many a pulpit. Many a sermon that rationalized the doctrine has passed into the limbo of defunct homiletics. Many a proof and illustration that once were delivered with the fire of an earnest purpose, could not possibly to-day catch fire in even an earnest delivery, nor at all convince an audience of candid Bereans. Many a little system, in which the Scripture doctrine was incorrectly set, and according to which it was incorrectly argued, would now only stir a smile with those that know the history of the reaffirmation of the doctrine, and would be but vague, lifeless logic to intelligent youth. The truth of baptism for the remission of sins is none the less preached in its scriptural good. It is simply less and less rationalized, less and less disproportionately affirmed, less and less absurdly argued, less and less mechanically illustrated.

The truth of the doctrine will prevail. It will be understood better and better in its Scripture setting. It will be truly and helpfully preached. It will be argued in a true logic, which, in fullness of content and process, will silence all opposition to the doctrine. Along two lines especially, still edifying the need, it

will thus prove itself scriptural and catholic—as regards the status and duty of pious persons unbaptized; and as regards the status and duty of unbaptized children whose parents and Sunday-school teachers are nurturing them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord. Along these two lines the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins will signally appear in its lights of scripturalness and catholicity. For the remission of sins, as we have seen, in the sense of a representation, a confirmation, an association, a consummation of salvation, the truth will, assuredly, more and more face the pious Pædobaptist. He has not been baptized. He is a devout believer in the Gospel of salvation; but he has not been baptized. He thinks that he has been baptized, but in fact he has not. Neither his conscious sprinkling in manhood, nor his unconscious sprinkling in infancy, whichever it was, was baptism according to the Scriptures. The command of the Lord to him, to be baptized, baptized unto the remission of his sins, faces him, not that in no sense has he the promise of salvation yet unbaptized. That promise he has in a real sense, according to his faith, as the Scriptures undeniably teach. But the Scriptures, undeniably teaching that “every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts x. 43), undeniably teach also a baptism unto the remission of sins (Acts ii. 38)—a remission not fictional nor magical nor mechanical, but real and vital, in the sense of a representation, a confirmation, an association, a consummation of salvation. In that light shines the scriptural commandment for the pious Pædobaptist or the devout Quaker to be baptized. He will be baptized, he can be baptized, only as he sees that

light. His ignorance, his prejudice, his wrong teaching may make against his seeing; they may make it harder for him to see. But the truth ought to be preached in love and long suffering, enlightening his error, and warning him that, as he sees the light of baptism in its Scripture action and meaning, his past lack of baptism becomes not a guilty rejection for himself of the counsel of God in not being baptized (Luke vii. 30). Such scriptural preaching will inform and convince pious unbaptized believers more directly and effectively than any sermon of rationalistic agnosticism concerning their status. Such a scriptural attitude of a church of Christ toward such a believer, having fellowship with him in prayer or song or the Lord's Supper (do not even the agnostics the same?), while denying to him full and formal membership in the congregation, is the very way for the congregation historically to accentuate baptism in Scripture action and meaning, and eventually, along with an Apostolic life of faith and good works, while showing the vital relation of baptism to full and formal membership congregationally, to restore, in evangelistic progress, the Apostolic baptism to Christendom.

But, unquestionably, above all, the "one baptism for the remission of sins" will prove its scripturalness and helpfulness, as children are trained according to the will of God. There will be less and less need to preach set sermons against the unscripturalness of infant baptism. The true, strategic discourse nowadays is to preach on the significance of the decline of infant baptism. For declining it surely is. Nothing can arrest that decline, not even the exhortations of earnest bishops, certainly not the far-off deductions of the pul-

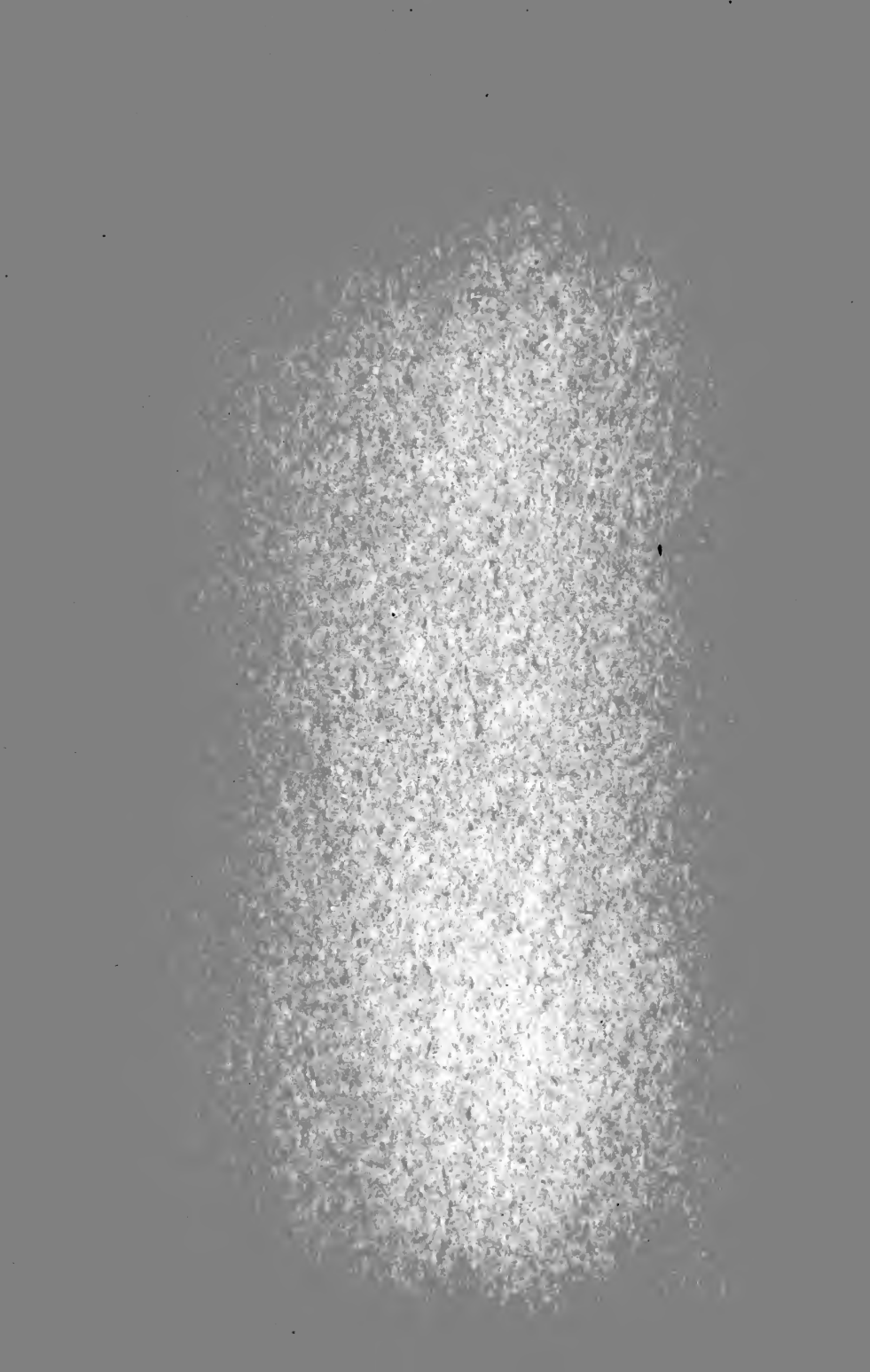
pit which begins by acknowledging the lack of commandment or precedent scripturally for the institution, and pleads for it simply as a privilege of parents. But as a child lives and grows while yet unbaptized, the concern of preachers, parents, teachers, must deeply be that the child be nurtured in the chastening and admonition of the Lord. Our faith and practice in so training childhood must be scripturally large and scripturally strong and hopeful. According to the Scriptures, there is not one duty or blessing of manhood or womanhood, essentially related to spiritual character, that is not already present initially for the child, as it is nurtured in the chastening and admonition of the Lord. Children a heritage of the Lord (Ps. cxxvii. 3), a godly seed in God's will (Mal. ii. 15), remembering and trusting God in their early days (Ecc. xii. 1; Ps. lxxi. 5), of such the kingdom of God (Luke xviii. 16), obeying their parents in the Lord (Eph. vi. 1), consecrated in the holy atmosphere of parental faith (I. Cor. vii. 4), from babyhood knowing the Bible as it makes them wise unto salvation through faith in Christ (II. Tim. iii. 14, 15)—such is the Scripture teaching of the vital relation of a child to the redemption in Christ. In this relation, not fictional but real, it is taught to obey its parents in the Lord, and so to please the Lord. It is taught to love God as it is taught to do right. It is taught to believe in Christ, as it is taught to be sorry for any sins and to pray the Lord to forgive them. It is taught to pray for any blessing for the need of its little life, in any concern of its little heart—the forgiveness of sins, the strength to be a better child, the care of an absent father, the protection of the missionary in the far-off land. Only

such training can be called a nurturing in the chastening and admonition of the Lord ; and so the child is trained to that wonderful hour of distinct individual responsibility when publicly, in the congregation, it confesses the good confession, and is baptized unto the remission of its sins. Scripturally, helpfully, beautifully it is a baptism, not magical nor mechanical, but real in the representation, confirmation, association, consummation of the salvation in whose reality and blessing the child has been reared all along.

Thus, to conclude, the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins is to be scripturally and helpfully taught, according to its place in the Biblical doctrine of redemption. Such a sense of baptism will appear more and more real, as the redemption that is in Christ is seen more clearly in all its real relations to the primal creation in Christ. The long line of Scriptures on the subject must become to us a familiar induction, as they teach the will, presence, work of God as regards the sins of men, in and through His only begotten Son—a God loving, long-suffering, “in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses” (II. Cor. v. 19), “having forgiven us all our trespasses ; having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us : and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross” (Col. ii. 13, 14). It is the Gospel of a God whose will, presence, work are in all the history and experience of men for their salvation, according to the eternal redemption obtained by Christ (I. Tim. ii. 1-6 ; Heb. ix. 12). It is a Gospel of salvation in whose full-orbed light we are to read every human need, duty, aspiration. It is the revelation of

a redemption which, in God's eternal purpose and power, vitally affects all human life, from the smallest stir of conscience to the heart's reception of "the fullness of the blessing of Christ" (Rom. ii. 13-16; xv. 29), here in the sudden cry of a barbarous man for salvation (Acts xvi. 30), there in a child's orderly growth in the knowledge and experience of salvation (II. Tim. iii. 14, 15), initially in and through a kingdom not of this world, the increase of which shall have no end until the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ (John xviii. 13; Rev. xi. 15). As this unity of the Biblical truth of redemption is thus livingly held and taught in all ethical and spiritual realness, it will magnify the superabounding grace of God, and intensify the responsibility of man. The Gospel of man's salvation will surely issue in judgment, according as he accepts it with the free gift of eternal life, or rejects it, to his eternal destruction from the face of the Lord (Rom. vi. 23; II. Thess. i. 9). Such a salvation of grace, neither magical nor mechanical, but real and spiritual, gratefully sings in breadth and depth of knowledge, after the primitive creed, "I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins." For that confession was possible only in view of the pattern of sound words, inspired of God—"One body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" (Eph. iv. 4-6).





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